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THE ROMANCES OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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The Marie Antoinette Romances

M. DE CHAUVELIN'S WILL

AND STORIES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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THE ROMANCES OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

CHAUVELIN'S WILL

A Romance of the Last Days of Louis XV.

AND

STORIES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The Woman with the Velvet Necklace and Blanche de Beaulieu

BOSTON
LITTLE BROWN AND COMPANY

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University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U. S. A.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

MONSIEUR DE CHAUVELIN'S WILL.

In "Monsieur de Chauvelin's Will" we are introduced to several of the historical characters who play parts of some prominence in the first of the so-called Marie-Antoinette Romances, the "Memoirs of a Physician," and to one — the Duc de Richelieu — who had been a leading figure at court and in society from the very beginning of the century, and whom the author has introduced, as a young man, in the "Regent's Daughter," and, a few years later, in "Olympe de Clèves," lending a willing hand in the work of corrupting the young Louis XV., and launching him upon the path which he followed so consistently to the last ghastly hour of his deplorable life.

The historical element is not more prominent in any of the author's historical romances than in the one before us. As the characters, almost without exception, are historical personages, so it may be said that there is authority for almost every incident of the narrative. Indeed, those chapters which deal with the life at court at the close of

the long reign of Louis XV., the ill-feeling between the low-born favorite and the ill-fated Marie-Antoinette, the constantly recurring incidents which were looked upon by the king as ominous of his impending death, the indecorous dissensions at his bedside between the factions of the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Duc de Choiseul, the unclerical conduct of the Archbishop of Paris, and the details of the closing scenes, illumined by the heroic devotion of the despised and neglected princesses and the blind priest, — those chapters read like so many pages from some of the many historical works of the school to which the reign of Louis XV. seems to offer peculiar attractions. Imbert de Saint-Amand, Arsène Houssaye, and the De Goncourts occupy prominent positions among the writers of that school, and most of the incidents here described were deemed deserving of a place in their pages.

The Abbé de Beauvais, Bishop of Senez, was the Lenten preacher at court in 1773 and 1774, and much surprise was felt that the bold and outspoken language of his sermons did not prevent his appointment to the bishopric. The threatening passage from the sermon preached on Holy Thursday — "Forty days more, sire, and Nineveh will be destroyed!" — is historical. Houssaye says that Louis died on the fortieth day,[1] and the De Goncourts cite a work entitled "Interviews in the Other World," wherein Louis XV. is represented

[1] Arsène Houssaye: "Galerie du XVIII^e Siècle. — Louis XV."

as saying to the Prince de Conti: "You are well aware, cousin, that it was that infernal sermon on Holy Thursday, 1774, that killed me."[1]

"The mirror surmounted by two Cupids holding a crown" is mentioned by the authors last quoted as forming a part of a whole toilet set in solid gold for which the order was given to Roettiers (Rotiers), but which was never completed.

The same authors refer to the project of the favorite to persuade the pope to annul her marriage with the Comte du Barry. "He" (the Abbé du Terray) "gave substance to the chimera held up momentarily before the imagination of the favorite by the chancellor and the Duc d'Aiguillon: the annulment of her marriage with the Comte du Barry and a marriage of conscience with the king."

The Marquis de Chauvelin actually existed, but his name is connected only with the pleasures of the king. Like Richelieu and D'Ayen, he has no place in serious history. "One evening" — we quote the brothers De Goncourt once more — "when Louis XV. was playing at piquet with Madame du Barry, and the Marquis de Chauvelin, his old friend and former companion in dissipation, was leaning upon the back of his chair, Madame du Barry raised her eyes and said: 'Why, Monsieur de Chauvelin, what a face you are making!' The king turned: Chauvelin fell dead at his feet."

Many different stories were circulated to explain the attack of smallpox, all having some connec-

[1] E. & J. de Goncourt: "La du Barry."

tion with the king's persistence in the evil courses in which he had indulged so long, but Voltaire tells us that there was an epidemic of the disease in the neighborhood and that the king fell a victim to it.

There is no lack of authority for the scandalous scenes about the bedside of the dying monarch, as described by Dumas, or for the grewsome details of the closing hours of his life. Shocking as all the circumstances of his death were, one cannot avoid a feeling that it was a fitting end for the selfish, heartless, weak, pleasure-loving king, who had taken for his motto: "After me the deluge!" and whose life seemed to be governed by no other sentiment than that therein implied. The deluge came after him, largely through his instrumentality, and it was fitting that he should have a foretaste of the suffering in store for the innocent victims of his misgovernment and oppression.

THE WOMAN WITH THE VELVET NECKLACE.

THE weird and fanciful episode of which Dumas has made Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann the hero is in Hoffmann's own peculiar vein, and might well have been a conceit of the gifted German himself, "who is chiefly celebrated," says Dr. Hedge, "for his successful use of the magic and demoniac element in fiction."

Hoffmann was, as we are told by Dumas, born at Königsberg in 1776. He was educated for the bar, and during his early manhood held several minor judicial offices in Posen and Warsaw. In 1816 he became a councillor in the Royal Court at Berlin. He died in 1822, at the early age of forty-six, his constitution having been undermined by dissipation. His father, a man of bad temper, deserted him in his childhood and his uncle, a pedant, educated him. The combination of his father's temper, which he inherited, and of his uncle's habits, which he acquired, resulted in a mental unnaturalness and unsoundness which he never outgrew. In his early manhood he lost his position as a result of Napoleon's invasion, and for several years earned his living by giving lessons in music and drawing, two arts of which he was a perfect master. When he was reinstated in his office, he evinced an irritability of temper and had contracted habits which unfitted him for respectable society. He retired from the drawing-room to the tavern, where his keen wit and brilliant imagination soon gathered a coterie of revellers about him. His mind exhibited, according to Menzel, a curious combination of manliness, humor, poetry, and morbid sensibility. "From the devil down to a wry-faced child's doll, from the dissonance of life which rends the soul, down to a dissonance in music which only rends the ear, the immeasurable kingdom of the ugly and the repulsive was gathered about him, and his descriptions paint alternately these tormenting objects and the torments they prepare for a beautiful

soul, with inimitable vividness and truth. . . . Hoffmann's innermost being was music; and the prayer of St. Anthony is never wanting to his hellish caricatures, nor the Christmas bell to his witches' sabbath." He was a very prolific writer, principally of short tales.

Frederick Ludwig Zacharias Werner attained eminence principally as a dramatist. He was born at Königsberg in 1768, and was therefore eight years older than Hoffmann. He became a Roman Catholic in 1811 and was ordained a priest in 1814. He preached in Vienna during the Congress of the Powers, and made a tremendous sensation by the blending in his sermons of coarseness and real power. He was in Poland during 1816 and 1817, but in the latter year returned to Vienna, where he continued to preach with great effect until his death in 1823. His *Works*, dramas, lyric poems, hymns, sermons, etc., fill fourteen volumes. Hoffman composed the incidental music for some of his dramas.

Danton's weaknesses are so well known and so important a part of the history of the man and his time that we need cite no evidence in support of the *vraisemblance* of his relations with Arsène. His dissipated habits and his susceptibility to the charms of the other sex did much to neutralize the influence of his very great powers as an orator and a demagogue, to weaken his hold upon even his most devoted adherents, and thereby to hasten his downfall and the triumph of his former colleague and ally, Robespierre. "Danton," says Lamartine, "lacked nothing of being a great man, save virtue."

It is impossible to imagine a more striking and instructive contrast than that presented by the two pictures of Madame du Barry in the two romances contained in this volume. And both, it need hardly be said, are equally true to life. The bearing and conduct on the scaffold of that woman of the people, who had risen from the gutter to the most exalted position in the kingdom, might well have caused men's minds to turn backward to that other day — only fifty-three days earlier — when, "amid the hooting of the mob, on a cold October morning, the daughter of the Cæsars was more sublime, more majestic than upon the throne. Dressed in white, like a ghost, pale as death, with a slight tinge of red on the cheek-bones, her eyes injected, not with tears but with blood, her hair blanched by misfortune, she was, to the very end, calm, serene, magnanimous, looking down with a sweet pitying expression upon the infernal tumult that surrounded her."[1]

Speaking of the conduct of Madame du Barry after her condemnation, and after the failure of her frantic, dastardly struggles to obtain pardon, or even a respite, by revealing the hiding-places of all her valuables, and by betraying, giving over to certain death, those whose lives were endangered solely by their devotion to her, the brothers De Goncourt say: —

"It was a time when courage was no longer of any sex. Condemned like men, women died like

[1] Imbert de Saint-Amand: "Les Dernières Années de Louis XV."

men. One would have said they were jealous of the right to die. Some mounted the scaffold as if to the sacrifice, others as if it were the pulpit. Some seemed to be marching forward to posterity, others to a new fatherland. Each was worthy of all. Bourgeoises died like Roman matrons, great ladies died like great noblemen, queens died like kings. But all had the force of an idea, a principle, a faith, a duty, a right, a passion, an illusion, — something in short that sustains the soul and enables it to face death. Madame du Barry had nothing of the sort to enable her to die; and if there is in her story a scandal that should be forgiven her, it is the scandal of a death that moved the heart of the Terror.

"As she mounted the tumbril, Madame du Barry, to whom at the time of her confession Denisot the magistrate had held out vague hopes of pardon, and who, although her hair had been cut off, did not believe that she was going to die, — Madame du Barry became as white as the dress she wore.

"The mob — a Sunday mob — was awaiting the unhappy woman. And in the front ranks the prisoner could see Greive, who said that evening: 'I never laughed so much in my life as I did when I saw the wry faces that pretty —— made because she was going to die.'

"The horses moved forward slowly.

"The people crowded around to look at the *ci-devant tyrant's harlot.*

"She at whom they gazed saw nothing, heard nothing; she did naught but sigh and sob and choke. . . .

"Suddenly, at the Barrière des Sergents near the Palais-Royal, she raised her eyes as she was passing a milliner's shop where the girls had assembled on the balcony to see, for the last time, her who had been Madame du Barry: it was the shop where she had once been a milliner's apprentice.

. . . . .

"The executioner and his assistants had difficulty in holding her, in keeping her upon the tumbril, for the convulsions of terror made her struggle to throw herself to the ground.

"These violent struggles, these shrieks were succeeded by entreaties mingled with tears; and the woman, brushing back her short hair from her brow and her eyes, leaned out over the mob, hungering to witness her death, and exclaimed: 'My friends — save me — I never injured any one — in heaven's name, save me!'

"The crowd was amazed. They were so accustomed to see the victims die nobly, die *à la bravade*, that it seemed to them for the first time as if a woman was about to be murdered.

"Meanwhile she exclaimed, still weeping, 'Life! life! — give me my life. I give all my property to the nation!'

"'Your property! why, you only give the nation what belongs to it already.'

"A charcoal-burner who was standing in front of the scoffer turned, and, without a word, struck him in the face.

"Throughout the silent, stupefied groups there

was that first thrill of emotion which is, in a multitude, a sort of shudder of compassion.

"The driver whipped up his horses and abridged the spectacle.

"The tumbril arrived on Place de la Révolution at half-past four in the afternoon.

"Madame du Barry alighted first. On the steps leading to the scaffold, desperate, mad with anguish and terror, she struggled, implored, begged the executioner for mercy: 'Just one minute more, Monsieur le Bourreau!' and then, as the knife descended: 'Help! help!' like a woman murdered by thieves." [1]

Saint-Amand puts the following words in the mouth of Madame du Barry, speaking from the grave in her turn as the last of the mistresses of Louis XV:—

"'I paid dear for the joys of luxury and a life of licentiousness; I knew not how to live nor to die. At a time when heroism was a commonplace quality I was weak and afraid, I shuddered on the scaffold!'"

The early chapters of "The Woman with the Velvet Necklace," and of "Monsieur de Chauvelin's Will" as well, afford an excellent illustration of the accuracy of the statement made by M. Blaze de Bury in his book upon the works of the elder Dumas. He says that Dumas has told the story of the most important events of his life in his books, and has thereby obviated the necessity of a biography.

[1] E. & J. de Goncourt: "La du Barry."

Charles Nodier was one of the dearest of the many dear friends who did homage to the many lovable qualities of the great romancist, and this is not the only one of Dumas' works in which he has taken occasion to express his appreciation of the friendship and kindness of that accomplished, versatile, and prolific man of letters, and discoverer of the taratantaleo.

The story of Dumas' first acquaintance with Monsieur de Villenave and with Nodier is told by him in substantially the same form, but with somewhat more detail, in the fifth volume of "Mes Mémoires."

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1774.

Louis XV., King of France.
The Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI.
Marie Antoinette, the Dauphiness.
Duc de Richelieu,
Marquis de Chauvelin,
Duc d'Aiguillon,
Duc de Choiseul,
Duc d'Aumont,
Duc de la Vrillière,
Duc de Coigny,
Duc d'Ayen,
} of the French Court.
Comtesse du Barry, the King's mistress.
Chon, her sister.
Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris.
Monsieur de Lorry, Bishop of Tarbes.
Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon.
The Bishop of Carcassonne.
Abbé de Laville.
Abbé de Broglio.
Monsieur de Sartines.
Monsieur Lamartinière, the King's first surgeon.
Monsieur Bonnard,
Monsieur Bordeu,
} physicians to the King.
Marquise de Chauvelin, wife of Marquis de Chauvelin.

Père Delar, her spiritual director.
The Children of Monsieur and Madame de Chauvelin.
Abbé de Villenave, their tutor.
Bonbonne, steward of Marquis de Chauvelin.
A Courier of the King.
La Gourdan.
Sophie Arnould, an actress.

CONTENTS.

MONSIEUR DE CHAUVELIN'S WILL.

Chapter		Page
I.	The House on Rue de Vaugirard	1
II.	A Pastel by Latour	13
III.	The Letter	23
IV.	The King's Physician	35
V.	The King's Morning Reception	48
VI.	Madame du Barry's Mirror	59
VII.	The Monk, the Tutor, the Steward	69
VIII.	The Gambler's Oath	78
IX.	Venus and Psyche	93
X.	The King's Card-party	104
XI.	The Vision	115
XII.	The Death of Louis XV.	132

THE WOMAN WITH THE VELVET NECKLACE.

I.	The Arsenal	149
II.	The Hoffmann Family	191
III.	A Lover and a Madman	198
IV.	Master Gottlieb Murr	208
V.	Antonia	221
VI.	The Oath	229
VII.	A Paris Barrier in 1793	239

Chapter		Page
VIII.	How the Museums and Libraries were Closed, but Place de la Révolution was Open	251
IX.	The Judgment of Paris	261
X.	Arsène	270
XI.	The Second Performance of the Judgment of Paris	283
XII.	The Wine-shop	294
XIII.	The Portrait	303
XIV.	The Tempter	312
XV.	Number 113	320
XVI.	The Locket	331
XVII.	A Hotel on Rue Saint-Honoré	340

BLANCHE DE BEAULIEU 363

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAUVELIN'S WILL

Louis XV. . . . . *Frontispiece*

VELVET NECKLACE

Comtesse du Barry . . . . . *Frontispiece*
From an engraving.

BLANCHE DE BEAULIEU

General Alexander Dumas . . . . . *Frontispiece*

MONSIEUR DE CHAUVELIN'S WILL.

I.

THE HOUSE ON RUE DE VAUGIRARD.

As you go from Rue du Cherche-Midi to Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, you may notice at your left, facing a fountain at the corner of Rue du Regard and Rue de Vaugirard, a small house entered on the municipal registers as Number 84.

And now, before going farther, let me make a confession which I hesitated to make. Although I was welcomed in that house with the most open-hearted friendship, almost from the day of my arrival from the provinces; although for three years it was like my brother's house to me; although in all my griefs or joys, I might safely have knocked at the door of that house with my eyes closed, certain that it would open to my tears or my smiles; nevertheless, I was compelled, in order to state its location accurately to my readers, to locate it myself on a map of the city of Paris.

Mon Dieu! who would have believed it twenty years ago?

The fact is that, during the last twenty years, such a multiplicity of events, like a constantly rising tide, has

extinguished in the men of our generation the memories of their youth, that they no longer remember with the memory,— the memory has its twilight in which far-off souvenirs fade away,— but with the heart.

And so, when I lay aside my memory and take refuge in my heart, I find there, as in a consecrated tabernacle, all the treasured souvenirs which have escaped one by one from my life, as the water trickles drop by drop through the cracks in a vase; in the heart there is no twilight growing ever darker and darker, but a constantly brightening dawn. The memory tends to darkness, that is to say to nothingness; the heart tends to light, that is to say to God.

However, the little house is there, surrounded by a gray wall behind which it is half hidden, — for sale, so I am told, on the point of escaping from the hospitable hands that opened its doors to me, alas!

Let me tell you how I first came to enter those doors. That will lead us — by a roundabout path, I know — to the story I have to tell you; but no matter, come with me, we will talk as we follow the path, and I will try to make it seem shorter to you than it really is.

It was toward the close of 1826, I think. I spoke of an interval of twenty years only, and it is twenty-two years since, you see. I was then twenty-three years old.

I have told you of my literary dreams, apropos of poor James Rousseau. Even as early as 1826 they had become more ambitious. I was no longer writing "La Chasse et l'Amour" in collaboration with Adolphe de Leuven; nor was I then at work upon "La Noce et l'Enterrement" with Vulplan and Lasaagne: I was dreaming of "Christine" all by myself. A lovely dream! a glowing, resplendent dream, which, in my juvenile hopes, was to open to me

the garden of the Hesperides, the garden with the golden fruit of which Criticism is the attendant dragon.

Meanwhile, poor Hercules that I was, Necessity had placed a world on my shoulders. An evil-minded goddess is that same Necessity, for she had not even, as in poor Atlas' case, the excuse of desiring to rest for an hour by crushing me.

No, Necessity crushed me — me and many others — as I crush an anthill. Why? Who knows? Because I happened to be under her feet and because the cold goddess with the iron nails, having a bandage over her eyes, did not see me.

The world that she had placed upon my shoulders was my office desk.

I earned a hundred and twenty-five francs a month, and for that hundred and twenty-five francs this is what I was obliged to do.

I went to my office at ten o'clock; I left at five; but I returned in the evening at seven and remained till ten.

Why that extra amount of labor, in the summer, at that hour in the evening, that is to say, at the very time when it would have been so pleasant to breathe the pure air of the country or the intoxicating atmosphere of the theatres?

I will tell you why: The Duc d'Orléans' portfolio had to be made up.

That aide-de-camp of Dumouriez at Jemappes and Valmy, that outlaw of 1792, that professor at the college of Reichenau, that explorer of Cape Horn, that citizen of America, that prince who was the friend of the Foys, the Manuels, the Laffittes, and the Lafayettes, that king of 1830, that exile of 1848, was in 1826 still called the Duc d'Orléans.

It was the happy period of his life; as I had my

dream, so he had his. My dream was success for my work; his dream was the throne.

O my God! have compassion on the king! O my God! grant peace to the gray-haired man! O my God! give to the husband and father all the paternal and conjugal happiness that are still possible, in the infinite treasures of thy loving-kindness!

Alas! at Dreux, I saw bitter tears flow from the eyes of that crowned father on the tomb of the son who was to wear a crown.

Is it not true, sire, that the loss of your crown did not cost you so many tears as the death of your child?

Let us return to the Duc d'Orléans and his portfolio.

That portfolio contained the day's mail and the evening papers, which had to be sent to Neuilly.

And then, when the portfolio had been despatched by a courier on horseback, we had to await the reply.

The latest comer in the office was assigned to that task, and, as I was the latest comer, it was divided between myself and one other. My colleague Ernest Banet was detailed to make up the morning portfolio. We alternated in making up the portfolio on Sunday.

So it was that on a certain evening, after despatching the portfolio and while awaiting the messenger's return, I was scratching off a few lines of "Christine," when the office door opened, a shapely head, covered with light, curly hair, appeared in the opening, and a voice with a slightly mocking accent emitted, in tones that approached shrillness, the three monosyllables, —

"Are you there?"

"Yes," I answered quickly. "Come in."

I had recognized Cordelier Delanoue, who was, like myself, the son of a former general of the Republic, and, also like myself, a poet. Why has he been less successful

than I in the career we have followed together? I have no idea. He certainly has a brighter intellect than mine, and he writes undeniably better poetry.

Everything in this world is a caprice of chance, good luck or bad luck. Not till we are dead shall we know which of us two, he or I, has had the good luck or the bad luck.

Cordelier Delanoue's visit was a bit of good fortune. Like all the people I have loved, I loved him then and I love him today; but I love him more than I did, and I am sure that it is the same with him.

He came to ask me if I cared to go to the Athénée to hear a dissertation upon some subject or other.

The dissertator was Monsieur de Villenave.

I knew Monsieur de Villenave by name only. I knew that he had made a translation of Ovid that was highly esteemed, and that he had formerly been secretary to Monsieur de Malesherbes and tutor of Monsieur le Marquis de Chauvelin's children.

At that time, the play or diversion of any sort was a very infrequent experience with me. All the doors of theatres and salons which have since been thrown open to the author of "Henri III." and "Christine" were closed to the clerk on a salary of fifteen hundred francs, whose duty it was to make up Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans' evening portfolio. I accepted, and requested Delanoue to await the courier's return with me.

While we were waiting he read me an ode he had written. It was a preparation for the séance at the Athénée.

The courier returned; I was free, and we bent our steps toward Rue de Valois.

It would be impossible for me to tell you in what part of Rue de Valois the meetings of the Athénée were held;

that was the only time, I believe, that I ever went there. I never cared much for such functions, where a single person does the talking and everybody else listens. The subject must needs be very interesting or very unfamiliar, the person who speaks on that subject must needs be very eloquent or very picturesque, for me to find any attraction in that uncontroverted discourse, when contradiction would be contrary to propriety and criticism discourteous.

I have never been able to listen uninterruptedly to an orator or preacher. There is always some corner of the discourse upon which I catch, and which causes my thought to make a halt while the discourse goes on. Having once halted, I naturally begin to look at the subject from my own point of view; so that I make my speech or my sermon in an undertone while he is making his aloud. When we have both reached the end, we are often a hundred leagues apart, although we started from the same point.

It is the same with plays. Unless it be the first performance of a play written for Arnol, Grassot, or Ravel, that is to say, of a work which is completely out of my own line and which I frankly confess my inability to produce, I am the worst "first-nighter" imaginable. If the play is an imaginative one, the characters no sooner appear than they cease to be the author's creations and become my own. In the first *entr'acte* I take them, I appropriate them. Instead of waiting for what is to come in the remaining four acts, I introduce them into four acts of my own composition; I make the most of their characters, I utilize what there is original about them. If the *entr'acte* lasts no more than ten minutes, that is more than I need to build for them the card-house into which I induct them, and it is the same with my dramatic card-house as with the discourse or the sermon

of which I spoke just now. My card-house is almost never identical with the author's, so that, as I have made a reality of my dream, it is reality that seems a dream to me, a dream which I am all ready to combat, saying, "Why, that 's not right, Monsieur Arthur,— Why, that 's not right, Mademoiselle Honorine. — You go too fast or too slow; you turn to the right instead of to the left; you say yes when you ought to say no. Oh! oh! oh! why, this is unendurable!"

With historical plays it is much worse. I naturally have in my head my own play all thought out upon the subject treated; and as it naturally is constructed with all my faults, that is to say with abundance of details, with absolute rigidity of characters, and with a double, triple, or quadruple plot, it very rarely happens that my play bears the remotest resemblance to the one that is being played. Wherefore something that furnishes entertainment to others becomes simply torture to me.

Now my confrères are warned; if they invite me to the first performance of their plays now, they know on what conditions I attend.

I did that evening for Monsieur de Villenave what I do for everybody else; however, as I arrived when his lecture was three-fourths done, I began by looking at him instead of listening to him.

He was at that time a tall old man, sixty-four or sixty-five years old, with hair of the purest silver, a pale complexion, and bright black eyes. There was in his dress that sort of absent-minded neatness characteristic of the man who dresses once or twice a week, no more, and during the balance of the time sits about in the dust of his study, in an old pair of trousers, an old dressing-gown, and a pair of old shoes. It is the duty of the wife or the daughter, of the housekeeper in fact, to make ready the

holiday costume, with the frilled shirt and ruffle, and the starched white cravat. Hence the species of protest entered by that well-beaten, well-brushed costume against the every-day costume, which, for its part, has a horror of the bamboo switch and the whisk-broom.

Monsieur de Villenave wore a blue coat with brass buttons, black trousers, a white waistcoat, and a white cravat.

A strange mechanism that of the thought, — intellectual machinery which goes or stops regardless of what we may do, because it is God's hand that sets it up; a clock, which strikes, at the bidding of its caprice, the hours of the past and sometimes those of the future.

Upon what did my mind stop as I looked at Monsieur de Villenave? Was it, as I said just now, upon a corner of his discourse? No, but upon a corner of his life.

I had read at some time — where, I have no idea — a pamphlet by Monsieur de Villenave, published in 1794, entitled: "Relation de Voyage de 132 Nantais."

It was on that episode of Monsieur de Villenave's life that my mind caught, so to speak, when I saw Monsieur de Villenave for the first time.

Monsieur de Villenave had, as a matter of fact, lived at Nantes in 1793, at the same time that Jean-Baptiste Carrier of bloody memory lived there.

There he had seen the proconsul, deeming the trials too long and the guillotine too slow, suppress the trials,—which were entirely useless, by the way, as they never saved the accused, — and substitute for the guillotine the boats with airholes. He may perhaps have been on the quay on the Loire on the 15th November, 1793, when Carrier, as an initial test of his *republican baths* and *vertical banishment* — such were the names he bestowed upon the new style

of punishment invented by him — caused ninety-four priests to embark, on the pretext that they were to be taken to Belle Isle. He may have been on the bank of the river when the horrified current cast upon the bank the dead bodies of the ninety-four men of God. He may then have revolted at that spectacle, which, being renewed every night, after a little time so corrupted the water of the river that the people were forbidden to drink it. Perhaps he was even more imprudent than that, and went so far as to give Christian burial to some of those first victims, who were destined to be followed by so many others. At all events it came to pass that Monsieur de Villenave was arrested one morning and cast into prison, and was destined, with his companions, to do his part toward corrupting the river, when Carrier changed his mind. He selected a hundred and thirty-two prisoners and despatched them to Paris, as a mark of homage from the provincial scaffolds to the guillotine at the capital; but doubtless that mark of homage failed to satisfy him, for he sent orders to Captain Boussard, commanding the escort, to shoot his hundred and thirty-two prisoners on arriving at Ancenis.

Boussard was a good fellow, so he did nothing of the sort, but kept on towards Paris.

Carrier, being apprised of his failure to obey, despatched orders to Hentz, a member of the Convention, who was proconsul at Angers, to arrest Boussard when he arrived there, and to throw the hundred and thirty-two Nantes men into the water.

Hentz had Boussard arrested; but when it came to drowning the hundred and thirty-two prisoners, the brass of his revolutionary heart, which seems not to have been of triple thickness, melted, and he ordered the victims to march on toward Paris, — a proceeding which caused

Carrier to remark, shaking his head contemptuously, '*A poor drowner*, that Hentz, *a poor drowner!*"

And so the prisoners continued their journey. Out of a hundred and thirty-two, thirty-six died before reaching Paris, and the ninety-six who did arrive, arrived, luckily for them, just in time to testify at the trial of Carrier, instead of answering as defendants upon their own trial.

The 9th Thermidor had come, the day of reprisals had dawned, the turn of the judges to be judged had arrived, and the Convention, after a month's hesitation, had ordered the prosecution of the *great drowner*.

The result was that, at the memory of the pamphlet which Monsieur de Villenave had published thirty-two years before, in his prison, I allowed my thoughts to wander back over the past, and what I saw, what I heard, was no longer a literary address, delivered by a professor at the Athénée, but a terrible, scathing, deadly arraignment of the strong by the weak, of the judge by the accused, of the executioner by the victim.

And so great is the power of the imagination that hall, spectators, tribune, all were transformed: the lecture-room of the Athénée became the hall of the Convention; the peaceful auditors were changed to wrathful avengers, and the eloquent professor with the smooth-flowing periods was thundering forth a public accusation, demanding the death penalty, and bewailing the fact that Carrier had but a single life, wretchedly inadequate to pay for the fifteen thousand lives he had cut short.

And I seemed to see Carrier, with his lowering stare, shattering the accusation with his glance, and to hear him crying in his strident voice to his former colleagues, —

"Why blame me to-day for what you ordered me to do yesterday? Why, in accusing me the Convention accuses itself. My condemnation will be the condemnation of

you all; remember that! You will all be included in the proscription that includes me. If I am guilty, then everything in this room is guilty; yes, everything, everything, everything, even to the president's bell."

But, in spite of all that, they voted upon his fate; in spite of it all, he was condemned. The same terror which had guided the action guided the reaction, and the guillotine, after drinking the blood of the condemned, impassively drank the blood of the judges and executioners!

I had let my head fall between my hands, as if it were repugnant to me, execrable homicide though the man was, to see him suffer the death he had inflicted so freely upon humanity.

Delanoue touched me on the shoulder.

"It is done," he said.

"Ah!" I replied, "is he executed?"

"Who?"

"That abominable Carrier."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Delanoue, "and it 's a good thirty-two years since that little misfortune happened to him."

"Ah! you did well to wake me," I said. "I was having a nightmare."

"So you were asleep, eh?"

"At all events I was dreaming."

"The devil! I won't tell Monsieur de Villenave that. I am going to take you to his house to have a cup of tea."

"Oh! you can tell him if you choose; I will describe my dream, and he won't be offended."

Thereupon Delanoue, still uncertain whether I was really awake or not, led me from the empty lecture-room into a reception-room, where Monsieur de Villenave was receiving the congratulations of his friends.

There, I was presented in the first place to Monsieur de Villenave, then to Madame Mélanie Waldor, his daughter, then to Monsieur Théodore de Villenave, his son.

After that we all repaired on foot, by the Pont des Arts, to Faubourg Saint Germain.

After half an hour's walk we reached our destination and disappeared, one after another, in that house on Rue de Vaugirard which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and of whose interior I propose to give a description, after a short sketch of its external aspect.

II.

A PASTEL BY LATOUR.

The house had an individuality of its own, borrowed from that of the man who lived in it.

We have said that the walls were gray; we should have said that they were black.

You entered the premises through a large gate, cut in the wall, directly adjoining the porter's lodge; you then found yourself in a garden without flower-beds, trodden everywhere, with trellises without grapes, arbors without shade, trees almost without leaves. If a flower did happen to grow in a corner, it was one of those wild flowers, which are almost ashamed to show themselves in the city, and which, mistaking that dark, damp enclosure for a little desert, had grown up there by mistake, believing itself farther than it really was from the habitations of men, only to be plucked at once by a lovely, rosy-cheeked child, with fair curly hair, who seemed a cherub fallen from heaven and out of place in that out-of-the-way corner of earth.

From the garden, which was some forty or fifty feet square, and which ended in a broad, paved strip adjoining the house, you entered a tiled corridor.

Upon that corridor, at the end of which was a staircase, four doors opened: on the left, the doors of the dining-room and kitchen; on the right, the door of a small room, and the door leading to the pantry and offices.

This ground floor, which was dark and damp, was hardly occupied except at the hours for meals.

The real dwelling, that to which we were taken, was the first floor.

On the first floor were the landing, a small salon, a large salon, Madame Waldor's bedroom and Madame de Villenave's bedroom.

The salon was noticeable both in shape and furnishing.

It was oblong in shape with a console and a bust in each corner.

One of the busts was of Monsieur de Villenave.

Between the two busts at the farther end, on a console facing the fireplace, was the most important work of art and archæology in the salon.

It was the bronze urn which had contained Bayard's heart; a small bas-relief on its circumference represented the chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche* lowering the hilt of his sword.

Next came two large pictures: one by Holbein, a portrait of Anne Boleyn; the other by Claude Lorraine, representing an Italian landscape.

I believe that the two frames which hung opposite those pictures contained, one a portrait of Madame de Montespan, and the other a portrait of Madame de Sévigné or Madame de Grignan.

Of furniture upholstered in Utrecht velvet there were for the friends of the family capacious couches with thin white arms, and for strangers easy-chairs and ordinary chairs.

This floor was Madame Waldor's special domain, and there she exercised her vice-royalty.

We say her vice-royalty, because although her father had abandoned that salon to her, she was in reality only vice-queen there. As soon as Monsieur de Villenave entered he resumed his sovereignty, and thenceforth the reins of the conversation were in his hands.

There was something despotic in Monsieur de Villenave's character, displayed in his intercourse with strangers as well as with his family. You felt, on entering his house, that you belonged to the man who had seen so much, studied so much, who, in a word, knew so much. That despotism, tempered as it was by the courtesy of the master of the house, nevertheless, weighed oppressively upon the company as a whole. Perhaps the conversation was *more skilfully guided*, as they used to say, when Monsieur de Villenave was present, but it certainly was less free, less amusing, less clever, than when he was not there.

It was just the opposite with Nodier's salon. The more Nodier was at home the more at home every one else felt.

Luckily Monsieur de Villenave rarely came down to the salon. He passed most of his time in his own quarters, on the second floor, and on ordinary days did not appear until dinner; and after dinner, when he had talked for a moment, when he had moralized a little with his son, and scolded his wife a little, he stretched himself out in his arm-chair, closed his eyes while his daughter put his hair in curl-papers, and then went up to his own apartments again.

That quarter of an hour during which the teeth of the comb scratched his head gently, was the daily quarter of an hour of beatitude in which Monsieur de Villenave allowed himself to indulge.

But why those curl-papers? the reader will ask.

In the first place, perhaps they were only an excuse for having his head scratched. In the second place, Monsieur de Villenave was, as we have said, a fine old man who must once have been a fine young man, and his face with its strongly marked features was superbly framed in those waves of white hair which brought boldly in relief the brilliancy of his great black eyes.

In fact, we must admit that Monsieur de Villenave, although a student, was inclined to be coquettish, but coquettish with his head, nothing more.

In other respects his appearance mattered little to him. Whether his coat was blue or black, whether his trousers were full or tight, whether the toe of his boot was round or square, all such questions concerned his tailor and his boot-maker, or rather his daughter, who attended to all those details.

If his hair was well dressed that was enough for him.

When his daughter had put on his curl-papers — an operation which was performed invariably between eight and nine o'clock at night — Monsieur de Villenave took his candlestick and went upstairs.

It is Monsieur de Villenave in his own sanctum, *at home* as the English say, whom we propose to try to describe, with little hope of success.

The second floor was divided into vastly more compartments than the first; it consisted of a landing adorned with plaster busts, an anteroom, and four other rooms.

We will not characterize those rooms as salon, bedroom, dressing-room, and study. Little Monsieur de Villenave cared for all those superfluities! No: there were five rooms for books and boxes, — that is the whole story.

Those five rooms contained some forty thousand volumes and four thousand boxes.

The anteroom in itself formed an immense library. It had two exits: the one on the right led into Monsieur de Villenave's bedroom, which bedroom itself opened, through a corridor by the alcove, into a large closet lighted by inside windows; the one on the right opened into a large room, which, in turn, opened into a smaller one.

This large room which opened into the smaller one not only had, as did its neighbor, its four walls covered with bookcases filled with books and supported by foundations of boxes, but a very ingenious structure had been set up in the middle of each of the two rooms, similar to the affair sometimes placed in the centre of a salon so that people can sit all around it. Thanks to that structure the centre of the room, forming a library within a library, left free only a quadrangular space in which not more than one person could circulate freely. A second person would have impeded the circulation; and so it rarely happened that Monsieur de Villenave admitted anybody, even an intimate friend, to that *sanctum sanctorum*.

A few privileged ones may have put their heads in at the doors, and, through the learned dust that floated constantly in luminous atoms in the infrequent sunbeams which found their way into that tabernacle, have descried the bibliographic mysteries of Monsieur de Villenave, as Claudius, by virtue of his feminine disguise, was enabled to surprise some of the mysteries of the kindly goddess Isis from the atrium of her temple.

That was where the autographs were: the epoch of Louis XIV. alone filled five hundred volumes.

There too were the papers of Louis XVI., the correspondence of Malesherbes, four hundred autographs of Voltaire, two hundred of Rousseau. There were the genealogies of all the noble families of France, with their alliances and their proofs of nobility. There were the drawings of Raphael, Jules Romain, Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Lebrun, Lesueur, David, and Lethière; the collections of minerals too, rare books on plants, and unique manuscripts.

There, in short, was the labor of fifty years, engrossed

day after day by a single thought, absorbed hour after hour by a single passion, — the passion, at once so ardent and so gentle, of the collector, wherein the collector puts forth all his intelligence, and upon which his pleasure, his happiness, his very life depend.

Those two rooms were the precious ones. Certainly Monsieur de Villenave, who, many times, had almost given his life for nothing, would not have parted with the contents of those two rooms for a hundred thousand crowns.

There remained the bedroom and the dark room, situated at the right of the anteroom and extending back parallel to the two we have described.

The first of the two was Monsieur de Villenave's bedroom, in which the bed was certainly the least important article, being buried in a recess closed by two doors in the wainscoting.

That was the room in which Monsieur de Villenave received.

If it were absolutely necessary, you could walk there; likewise if it were absolutely necessary, you could sit down.

This is the way in which it was possible to sit down, and these the circumstances under which it became possible to walk.

The old servant — I have forgotten her name — would partly open Monsieur de Villenave's door and announce a visitor.

The opening of the door always surprised Monsieur de Villenave in the midst of a classification, a fit of musing, or a nap.

"Well! what is it, Françoise?" — Let us suppose that her name was Françoise. — "Great heaven! can't I be left in peace for an instant?"

"*Dame!* monsieur," Françoise would reply, "I had to come."

"Well, tell me quickly: what do you want of me? How is it that you always come just at the moment when I am the busiest? — Well!"

And Monsieur de Villenave would raise his great eyes heavenward with a despairing expression, fold his hands and heave a sigh of resignation.

Françoise was used to the stage-setting; she would allow Monsieur de Villenave to go through with his pantomime and his *asides*. And when he had finished,—

"Monsieur," she would say, "Monsieur *So-and-so* has come to make you a little call."

"I am not at home; go."

Françoise would open the door slowly; she knew what was coming.

"Wait, Françoise," Monsieur de Villenave would call to her.

"Yes, monsieur."

And she would open the door again.

"You say that it's Monsieur *So-and-so*, Françoise?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Oh, well! let him come in, and, if he stays too long, you can come and tell me that some one wants me. Go, Françoise."

Françoise would close the door.

"Oh! *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* would any one believe it?" Monsieur de Villenave would murmur. "I never disturb anybody, and yet somebody must needs disturb me constantly."

Françoise would open the door once more to admit the visitor.

"Ah! good morning, my friend," Monsieur de Villenave would say. "Glad to see you; come in,

come in. It 's a long while since we 've seen you. Pray sit down."

"On what?" the visitor would ask.

"Why, on whatever you choose, *pardieu!* On the couch."

"I would gladly do so, but"— Monsieur de Villenave would glance at the couch.

"Ah! yes, true. It 's covered with books," he would say. "Oh, well! Move up an easy-chair."

"It would give me great pleasure, but — "

Monsieur de Villenave would pass his easy-chairs in review.

"True," he would say. "But what can I do, my dear fellow? I don't know where to put my books. Take a common chair."

"I would ask nothing better, but — "

"But what? Are you in a hurry?"

"No, but I don't see that there are any more common chairs vacant than arm-chairs."

"It 's incredible," Monsieur de Villenave would say, throwing up his arms. "It 's incredible! Wait!"

He would leave his seat, groaning inwardly, carefully lift from a chair the books that rendered it useless, deposit the books on the floor where they added another molehill to the twenty or thirty similar ones scattered over the floor, and move the chair beside his own easy-chair, that is to say, to the corner of the hearth.

I have told you under what circumstances one could sit down in that room. I will proceed to tell under what circumstances you could walk about there.

It sometimes happened that just as the visitor entered, and after the indispensable preamble we have repeated, — it sometimes happened, we say, that, by a double

combination of chances, the door into the alcove and the door of the corridor leading to the closet behind the alcove were both open. At such times the visitor could see in the alcove a pastel representing a young and pretty woman holding a letter in her hand, the picture being lighted by the light from the window in the corridor.

Thereupon, if the visitor had any conception of art, — and it rarely happened that they who called on Monsieur de Villenave were not artists in some direction, — he would exclaim, —

"Oh, monsieur! what a beautiful pastel!"

And he would start to go from the hearth to the alcove.

"Wait!" Monsieur de Villenave would exclaim, "wait!"

Indeed, you could see that two or three molehills of books, toppling against each other, formed a sort of counterscarp of curious shape, which it was necessary to cross before reaching the alcove.

Thereupon Monsieur de Villenave would rise and lead the way, and, as a skilful miner opens a trench, he would open through the lines of typography a tunnel which made it possible to reach a point in front of the pastel, which itself faced the bed.

Having reached that point, the visitor would repeat, —

"Oh! what a beautiful pastel!"

"Yes," Monsieur de Villenave would reply, with the air of the ancient court which I have never noticed in any one but him and two or three old men of fashion like him, "yes, it 's a pastel by Latour. It represents an old friend of mine, who is no longer young; for, as well as I can remember, when I knew her in 1784,

she was five or six years older than I. We have never met since 1802, but that does not prevent our writing to each other every week and receiving our weekly letters with equal pleasure. Yes, you are right, it is a charming pastel, but the original was much more charming. Ah!"

And a ray of youth, as soft as a reflection of the sun, would pass over the handsome old man's beaming face, making him look forty years younger.

And very often, in the last-mentioned case, Françoise would have no need to make the false announcement that her master was wanted, for, if the visitor had any sense of delicacy, he would very soon leave Monsieur de Villenave absorbed in the reverie to which the sight of that lovely pastel of Latour had given birth.

III.

THE LETTER.

Now how had Monsieur de Villenave collected that fine library?

How had he made that collection of autographs without parallel in the world of collectors?

With the labor of his whole life. In the first place Monsieur de Villenave had never burned or destroyed a letter or a paper.

Notices of meetings of the learned societies, invitations to weddings, notices of funerals, — he had kept them all, classified them all, and each had its place. He possessed a collection of every imaginable thing, even of the volumes which had been snatched half-burned from the flames in the courtyard of the Bastille on the 14th of July.

Two men were constantly employed hunting for autographs for Monsieur de Villenave. One was a man named Fontaine, whom I knew, and who was himself the author of a book entitled "Le Manuel des Autographes." The other was a clerk in the Ministry of War. All the grocers in Paris were familiar with those two indefatigable visitors, and put aside for them all the papers they bought. They would make a selection from the papers, and buy them at fifteen sous the pound, Monsieur de Villenave paying them thirty sous.

Sometimes too Monsieur de Villenave would make an expedition on his own account. There was not a

grocer in Paris who did not know him, and who, when he saw him coming, did not get together the material for bags and horns of plenty to submit it to his learned investigation.

It goes without saying that, on the days when he went out for autographs, Monsieur de Villenave went out also for books. The indefatigable bibliophile would follow the line of the quays, and there, both his hands in his trousers' pockets, his tall body bent forward, his fine face lighted up by the longing for a lucky find, he would gaze eagerly into the depths of the show-windows, in quest of the unknown treasure. He would turn the leaves over for an instant, and when the book proved to be the one he had sighed for, when the edition was the one he was in search of, the book would leave the dealer's stall, — not to take its place in Monsieur de Villenave's library. In Monsieur de Villenave's library there was no room, and had been none for a long while, and it was necessary to make room by exchanging books for drawings or autographs. No, the book would take its place in the garret, which was divided into three compartments: one for octavos at the left, one for quartos at the right, one for folios in the centre.

There was the chaos out of which Monsieur de Villenave proposed some day to make a new world, something like an Australia or a New Zealand.

Meanwhile they lay on the ground, piled one upon another, in semi-darkness.

That garret was the limbo where the souls were confined whom God sends neither to heaven nor to hell, because he has designs upon them.

One day, without any apparent cause, the poor house trembled to its foundations, groaned, and cracked. The

terrified occupants thought that there had been an earthquake and rushed into the garden.

Everything was peaceful, in earth and sky. The fountain continued to play at the corner of the street. A bird was singing in the highest branches of the tallest tree.

The disaster was only partial. It proceeded from some secret, mysterious, unknown cause.

They sent for the architect.

The architect examined the house, sounded the walls, asked many questions, and ended by declaring that the accident could have had no other cause than an overstrain.

Accordingly he asked leave to inspect the garret.

But that request was met with vigorous opposition on the part of Monsieur de Villenave.

What was the explanation of that opposition, which yielded at last in face of the architect's firmness?

It was that Monsieur de Villenave felt that his hidden treasure, the more precious to him in that he was almost unacquainted with it, was exposed to great risk by that visit.

Indeed, in the middle chamber alone they found twelve hundred folios weighing almost eight thousand pounds.

Alas! he had no choice but to sell those twelve hundred folios, which had made the house sag, and which threatened to pull it down.

That painful operation took place in 1822. And in 1826, when I first knew Monsieur de Villenave, he had not recovered from that blow, and more than one sigh, of which his family knew neither the cause nor the purpose, went in pursuit of those dear folios, collected by him with such infinite pains, and now, like

children driven from the paternal roof, wandering about, orphaned, and dispersed over the face of the earth.

I have said how kind and sweet and hospitable the house on Rue de Vaugirard was to me: on the part of Madame de Villenave, because she was naturally affectionate; on the part of Madame de Waldor, because, being a poet, she was fond of poets; on the part of Théodore de Villenave, because we were of the same age, and both at the age when one feels the need of giving away a portion of his heart and of receiving a portion of the hearts of others.

Lastly, on the part of Monsieur de Villenave, because, although I was not a collector of autographs, I possessed, thanks to my father's military portfolio, an interesting collection of them. For, as my father held high rank in the army from 1791 to 1800, having thrice been general-in-chief, he had been in correspondence with all those who had played prominent parts during those years.

The most interesting autographs in that correspondence were those of General *Buonaparte*. Napoléon did not long retain that Italianized name. Three months after the 13th Vendémiaire he adopted the French form, and signed himself *Bonaparte*. My father had received during that brief period five or six letters from the young general of the interior. That was the title he assumed after the 13th Vendémiaire.

I gave Monsieur de Villenave one of those autographs flanked by one of Saint-Georges, and one of the Maréchal de Richelieu; and, by virtue of that sacrifice, which was a pleasure to me, I was admitted to the privileges of the second floor.

Little by little I became sufficiently intimate in the house for Françoise to cease announcing me to Monsieur

de Villenave. I used to go up alone to the second floor. I would knock at his bedroom door, open at the words, "Come in!" and was almost always well received.

I say almost always, because great passions have their hours of tempest. Suppose a collector of autographs, who has long coveted a precious signature, — a signature of Robespierre, for instance, who left only three or four; of Molière, who left only one or two; of Shakespeare, who, I believe, left none at all; and suppose that, just as he has his hand on that unique or almost unique signature, it eludes our collector's grasp by some accident or other. Naturally he is in despair.

Enter his room at such a moment, though you be his father, his brother, or an angel, and you will see how you will be received; unless, by the way, being an angel, you exert your divine power to produce the signature that had no existence, or to duplicate the signature of which there is but one known example.

Such were the exceptional circumstances under which I was ungraciously received by Monsieur de Villenave. Under any other circumstances I was sure of finding a pleasant face, a ready mind, an obliging memory, even during the week.

I say "during the week," because Sunday was set aside for scientific visitors at Monsieur de Villenave's.

All the foreign bibliophiles and cosmopolitan collectors of autographs who came to Paris never failed to pay a visit to Monsieur de Villenave, as vassals go to do homage to their sovereign.

Sunday was the day for exchanges. By means of those exchanges, Monsieur de Villenave completed his foreign collections, for which his grocers were insufficient, abandoning to the German, English, or American

collectors some parings of his magnificent French material.

So I was admitted to the house. I was received first on the first floor, and in due time on the second. I had obtained the right of entry there every Sunday; and lastly, I had been granted the privilege of going there whenever I chose, a privilege which I shared with two or three others at most.

Now, on a certain week day, a Tuesday I think, I called upon Monsieur de Villenave to ask leave to study an autograph of Christine, — for I like, as you know, to form an opinion of the character of my personages from the style of their handwriting; one day, I say, I called upon that errand, about five o'clock in the afternoon, and rang at the door. I asked for Monsieur de Villenave, and was admitted.

As I was passing through the door, Françoise called me.

"What is it, Françoise?" I asked.

"Is monsieur going to call on the ladies or on monsieur?"

"I am going up to monsieur's room, Françoise."

"Very well, if monsieur was very good he would spare my poor legs two flights of stairs and give Monsieur de Villenave this letter, which has just arrived for him."

"Willingly, Françoise."

Françoise gave me the letter, and I went upstairs.

When I reached the door I knocked as usual, but there was no reply.

I knocked a little louder.

Still no reply.

I knocked a third time, and that time with some uneasiness, for the key was in the door, and the presence

of the key in the door invariably indicated the presence of Monsieur de Villenave in his room.

I ventured, therefore, to open the door, and I saw Monsieur de Villenave drowsing in his easy-chair.

At the noise I made, or perhaps because of the current of air that entered with me and disturbed certain magnetic currents, Monsieur de Villenave gave a sort of cry.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," I said. "I beg your pardon a thousand times. I was careless; I disturbed you."

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"I am Alexandre Dumas."

"Ah!"

And Monsieur de Villenave breathed again.

"Really, I am in despair," I added, "and I will go.'

"No," said Monsieur de Villenave, heaving a sigh, and passing his hand across his forehead, "no, come in."

I went in.

"Take a seat."

By some chance a chair was vacant. I took it.

"How strange it is!" he said. "As you saw, I was dozing. The twilight has come. Meanwhile, my fire has gone out. You waked me. I found myself in an unlighted room, and could not explain the sound that had disturbed my sleep. Doubtless it was the air from the door blowing on my face. But it seemed to me that I saw a great white cloth floating in the air, something like a shroud. How strange it is, is it not?" continued Monsieur de Villenave, with the shuddering movement of the whole body which indicates that one is cold. "But it was you, I am happy to say."

"You say that to set my mind at rest concerning my awkwardness."

"No, really not. I am very glad to see you. What have you there?"

"Ah! I beg your pardon, I forgot. A letter for you."

"So! an autograph? Whose is it?"

"No, it 's not an autograph; it 's simply a letter, at least so I imagine."

"Oh! yes, a letter!"

"A letter that came by post and was given me by Françoise to bring to you. Here it is."

"Thanks. Just put out your hand, please, and give me —"

"What?"

"A match. Really, I am still as dull and confused as possible. If I were superstitious, I should believe something was going to happen."

He took the match I handed him and lighted it in the hot ashes on the hearth.

As it burned, the room became brighter and made it possible to distinguish the different objects.

"*Mon Dieu!*" I cried suddenly.

"What 's the matter?" Monsieur de Villenave asked, as he lighted the candle.

"*Mon Dieu!* your lovely pastel! What in heaven's name has happened to it?"

"You see," replied Monsieur de Villenave, sadly, "I have put it there by the chimney. I am expecting the picture-framer and the glazier."

"True, the frame is broken, and the glass shattered into a thousand pieces."

"Yes," said Monsieur de Villenave, looking at the portrait with a melancholy air, and forgetting his letter. "Yes, it 's an incomprehensible thing."

"Why, did some accident happen to it?"

"Day before yesterday I had worked all the evening. It was about a quarter to twelve. I went to bed, placed my candle on my night table, and was preparing to look over the proofs of a small compact edition of my Ovid, when I chanced to cast my eyes on my poor friend's portrait. I nodded a good-night to her as usual. The wind was blowing gently through the window, which had been left open, and it made the flame of my candle flicker so that it seemed to me that the portrait answered good-night, with a nod like my own. You will understand that I treated the vision as mere folly, but I don't know how it happened. My mind was filled with the idea, and I could not take my eyes off the picture. *Dame!* my friend, that pastel, as you know, dates back to my earliest youth. It recalls all sorts of memories. Imagine me, therefore, swimming in a full flood of reminiscences of the past twenty-five years. I spoke to my portrait. My memory answered for it, and, although it was my memory that answered, it seemed to me that the drawing moved its lips. It seemed to me that its colors faded. It seemed to me that its features assumed a sad expression. At that moment the clock on the Carmelite church began to strike twelve. At the lugubrious sound my poor friend's face assumed a more and more sorrowful expression. The wind continued to blow. At the last stroke of midnight the window of the closet blew open violently. I heard something like a wailing cry, and it seemed to me that the eyes of the portrait closed. The nail on which it hung broke. The portrait fell, and my candle went out.

"I rose to relight it, having no feeling of fear, but deeply impressed, nevertheless. As ill-luck would have it, I could not find a match. It was too late to

call, and I did not know where to look for one. I closed the window of the closet and went to bed without a light.

"All this had moved and saddened me. I felt an irresistible longing to weep. It seemed as if I could hear something like the rustling of a silk dress in the room. Several times I said: 'Is there any one here?' At last I fell asleep, but it was quite late, and when I woke I found my poor picture in the condition in which you see it."

"What a strange thing!" I said. "Have you received your weekly letter?"

"What letter?"

"The one that the original of the portrait always writes you."

"No, and that is what worries me. That is why I told Françoise to bring or send up without delay any letters which might come for me."

"Well, this one that I have brought you — "

"It is n't her way of folding her letters."

"Ah!"

"But no matter, it 's from Angers."

"Did she live at Angers?"

"Yes. Ah! my God! sealed with black! Poor, dear friend, can anything have happened to her?"

And Monsieur de Villenave turned pale as he broke the seal.

At the first words he read, his eyes filled with tears.

He took out a second letter, broken off at the fourth line, which was enclosed in the other.

He put the unfinished letter to his lips and handed me the other.

"Read," he said.

I read: —

"MONSIEUR, — My own sorrow is increased by that which you will feel when I inform you that Madame —— died on Sunday last on the last stroke of midnight.

"On the day before, while she was writing to you, she was taken ill with what we thought at first was a slight indisposition only, but she grew rapidly worse until she died.

"I have the honor to send you, incomplete as it is, the letter she had begun for you. That letter will prove to you that, down to the moment of her death, her feeling for you remained the same.

"I am, monsieur, very sadly, as you can believe, but always your very humble servant,

"THÉRÈSE MIRAND."

Monsieur de Villenave followed my eyes as they read the letter.

"At midnight!" he said. "It was at midnight, you remember, that the portrait fell to the floor and was shattered. The coincidence extends not only to the day, but to the hour."

"Yes," I replied. "That is so."

"You believe, then?" cried Monsieur de Villenave.

"Why, of course I believe."

"Oh, then come here some day, my friend, some day when I am a little less disturbed, won't you, and I will tell you something much stranger than that."

"Something that happened to you?"

"No, but something that I saw."

"When was that?"

"Oh, a long time ago. It was in 1774, when I was tutor to Monsieur de Chauvelin's children."

"And you say you will tell it to me?"

"Yes, I will tell you the story. Meanwhile, you understand —"

"I understand. You would like to be alone."

I rose and prepared to go.

"By the way," said Monsieur de Villenave, "just tell the ladies, as you go by, not to be disturbed about me. I shall not go down to dinner."

I signified that the errand should be done.

Thereupon Monsieur de Villenave twisted his chair around on one of its hind legs until he faced the portrait; and, as I closed the door, I heard him mutter, —

"Poor Sophie!"

The story you are about to read is the one that Monsieur de Villenave told me later.

IV.

THE KING'S PHYSICIAN.

On the 25th of April, 1774, King Louis XV. was in bed in the Blue Chamber at Versailles. Beside his bed, on a low cot, his physician Lamartinière was sleeping.

The clock in the principal courtyard of the château was striking five.

Shadows flitted restlessly about, careful not to disturb the slumbers of the prince at that hour, at which, for some time past, Louis XV., worn out by late hours and dissipation, had succeeded in obtaining a little rest, purchased by the misuse of insomnia, and by narcotics when that proved insufficient.

The king was no longer young. He was entering his sixty-fifth year. Having drained the cup of pleasure, of dissipation, of flattery to the dregs, there was nothing more for him to learn. He was bored.

The fever of ennui was the worst of his diseases. Acute under Madame de Châteauroux, it had become intermittent under Madame de Pompadour, and chronic under Madame du Barry.

They who have nothing left to learn sometimes have something left to love. That is a sovereign resource against the disease by which Louis XV. was attacked. Satiated in the matter of individual love by that which he had inspired in a whole people, and which had been carried to the point of frenzy, that habit of the heart

had seemed to him too commonplace for a king of France to indulge in it.

Thus Louis XV. had been beloved by his people, by his wife, and by his mistresses; but Louis XV. had never loved any one.

There also remains to those who are blasé another interesting source of preoccupation, — suffering. Apart from the two or three sicknesses he had had, Louis XV. had never suffered; and, being a highly-favored mortal, he felt no other warning of the approach of old age than a beginning of fatigue, which the physicians put forward as a signal for him to change his ways.

Sometimes, at those famous supper-parties at Choisy, at which the tables came up, all laden, through the floor, at which the service was performed by pages from the *petites écuries*, when the Comtesse du Barry incited Louis XV. to drink bumper upon bumper, the Duc d'Ayen to loud laughter, and the Marquis de Chauvelin to epicurean joviality, Louis XV. observed with surprise that his hand was slow to raise the glass, brimming with the sparkling fluid he had loved so much, that his brow refused to contract in that inextinguishable laughter which Jeanne Vaubernier's sallies had sometimes caused to bloom on the boundary line of his ripening years, and that his brain remained cold and unmoved by the seductive pictures of that blissful life which sovereign power, supreme wealth, and robust health afford.

Louis XV. was not naturally open and unreserved. He concealed his joy and sadness alike. Perhaps, by virtue of that inward absorption of his sentiments, he would have been a great politician, if, as he himself said, he had not lacked time.

As soon as he noticed the change that was beginning

to take place in him, instead of making the best of it and inhaling philosophically the first breezes of old age, which wrinkle the forehead and silver the hair, he drew back within himself and watched.

The thing that makes the most light-hearted men melancholy is analysis of joy or suffering. Analysis is a period of silence interjected between laughter and sobbing.

Hitherto the courtiers had only seen that the king was bored. Now they saw that he was depressed. He no longer laughed at Madame du Barry's ribald jests; he no longer smiled at the malicious remarks of the Duc d'Ayen; he no longer enjoyed the friendly caresses of Monsieur de Chauvelin, the friend of his heart, the fidus Achates of his royal escapades.

Madame du Barry was loudest in her complaints of this melancholy, whose most noticeable effect was coldness to her.

This moral change caused the doctors to declare that, although the king was not yet sick, he certainly would be before long.

And so, on the 15th of the preceding April, Lamartinière, his first surgeon, after administering to the king his monthly medicine, ventured to make certain suggestions which he considered of grave importance.

"Sire," Lamartinière had said to him, "as Your Majesty has ceased to drink, as Your Majesty has ceased to eat, as Your Majesty has ceased to — amuse yourself, what does Your Majesty propose to do?"

"*Dame!* my dear Lamartinière," the king replied, "whatever seems most entertaining to me outside of the things you have mentioned."

"The fact is that I do not know much of anything new to suggest to Your Majesty. Your Majesty has

been to war, Your Majesty has tried to love scholars and artists, Your Majesty has loved women and champagne. Now, when one has tasted glory, flattery, love, and wine, I declare to Your Majesty that I seek in vain a muscle, a chord, a nerve centre that discloses the existence of any untried aptitude for new forms of distraction."

"Aha!" said the king. "Do you really think so, Lamartinière?"

"Remember, sire, that Sardanapalus was a very intelligent king, almost as intelligent as Your Majesty, although he lived something like twenty-eight hundred years before you. He was fond of life, and devoted much thought to making a good use of it. I think I have read that he paid the most careful attention to the different methods of exercising the body and the mind in the search for little known pleasures. Even so, no historian has ever stated, so far as I know, that he found anything more than you have found yourself."

"Indeed, Lamartinière."

"I except champagne, sire, which Sardanapalus did not know. On the contrary, he had naught to drink but the thick, heavy, heady wines of Asia Minor, those liquid flames which filter through the pulp of the grapes of the archipelago, — wines whose intoxication is a frenzy, while that caused by champagne is only folly."

"True, my dear Lamartinière, true. Champagne is a pretty little wine, and I have been very fond of it. But tell me, didn't your Sardanapalus end by being burned at the stake?"

"Yes, sire, that was the only variety of pleasure that he had never tried. He kept it for the last."

"And it was with a view of making that pleasure as

intense as possible, I doubt not, that he burned up his palace, his wealth, and his favorite with himself?"

"Yes, sire."

"And would you advise me, my dear Lamartinière, to burn Versailles, and to burn myself and Madame du Barry at the same time?"

"No, sire. You have made war; you have seen conflagrations; you have been yourself in the thick of the cannonade at Fontenoy. Consequently fire would not be a novel form of entertainment to you. Come, let us recapitulate your means of defence against ennui."

"O Lamartinière, I am almost defenceless."

"In the first place, you have your friend, Monsieur de Chauvelin, a man of wit, a — "

"Chauvelin is no longer a man of wit, my dear fellow."

"Since when?"

"*Pardieu!* since I have been bored."

"Bah!" said Lamartinière. "That's as if you should say that Madame du Barry has ceased to be beautiful since — "

"Since what?" said the king, blushing a little.

"Oh! I know what I know," rejoined the surgeon brusquely.

"Well," said the king with a sigh, "it seems to be settled that I am going to be sick."

"I am afraid so, sire."

"Give me a remedy, then, Lamartinière, a remedy. Let us get the start of the disease."

"Rest, sire. I know no other."

"Very good!"

"Diet."

"Very good!"

"Amusement."

"I stop you there, Lamartinière."

"Why so?"

"You prescribe amusement and you don't tell me how I am to amuse myself. Very good! I consider you an ignoramus, an *ignorantissimus*, my friend! Do you hear?"

"And you are wrong, sire. It is your fault, not mine."

"How so?"

"It is a hopeless task to amuse those who are bored when they have such a friend as Monsieur de Chauvelin and such a mistress as Madame du Barry."

There was a pause, which seemed to indicate that the king acknowledged that what Lamartinière had said was not altogether devoid of sense.

Then the king continued, —

"Well, Lamartinière, my friend, as we are talking of diseases, let us reason together. You say that I have amused myself with everything in this world capable of furnishing amusement, do you not?"

"I say so, and it is so."

"With war?"

"*Pardieu!* I should say so, when you have won the battle of Fontenoy!"

"Yes, and it was a diverting spectacle too, — men in rags, and a tract four leagues long and one league wide soaked with blood; a smell of the shambles to do your heart good."

"And the glory, too!"

"But, after all, did I win the battle? Was n't it Monsieur le Maréchal de Saxe? Was n't it Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu? Was n't it Pecquigny more than all the rest, with his four guns?"

"Never mind. Who gets all the credit of it? You."

"I believe you; and so that is the reason why you imagine that I must love glory. Ah! my dear Lamartinière," the king added, heaving a sigh, "if you knew what a wretched bed I slept on the night before Fontenoy!"

"Oh, well! Let us leave glory out of the question. If you don't choose to acquire it yourself, you can let the painters, poets, and historians make it for you."

"Lamartinière, I have a perfect horror of all those people, who are either pitiful creatures, duller than my lackeys, or giants of pride too tall to pass under my great-grandfather's triumphal arches. That Voltaire above all. Why, did not the knave lay his hand on my shoulder one evening and call me Trajan? People tell him that he is the king of my kingdom, and the puppy believes it. So I don't want any of the immortality those people could give me. One has to pay too high a price for it in this perishable world, and perhaps in the other too."

"In that case, what do you want, sire? Tell me."

"I want to make my life last as long as possible. I want to have in my life the greatest possible number of things I love; and for that I shall not apply to poets or philosophers or warriors. No, Lamartinière, except God, I really have no esteem for anybody but the doctors, — when they are good ones, I mean, of course."

"*Parbleu!*"

"So speak frankly, my dear Lamartinière."

"Yes, sire."

"What have I to dread?"

"Apoplexy."

"Do people die of it?"

"Yes, if they are not bled in time."

"Lamartinière, you must not leave me any more."

"That is impossible, sire. I have my other patients."

"Indeed! but it seems to me that my health is a matter of as much interest to France and to Europe as that of all your patients together. A bed will be made up for you beside mine every night."

"Sire!"

"What difference does it make to you whether you sleep here or elsewhere? And you will reassure me by your mere presence, Lamartinière, and you will frighten away disease, for disease knows you and knows that it has no sturdier foe than you."

That is why Lamartinière was lying in a low bed in the Blue Chamber at Versailles on April 25, 1774, sleeping soundly, about five o'clock in the morning, while the king was wide awake.

Louis XV., who, as we have stated, was not asleep, heaved a great sigh; but, inasmuch as a sigh has no positive meaning except that which the sigher gives to it, Lamartinière, who was snoring instead of sighing, heard it as he snored, but paid, or rather seemed to pay, no attention to it.

The king, seeing that his surgeon in ordinary was insensible to that appeal, leaned over the edge of the bed, and, by the light of the great candle burning in the marble candlestick, he gazed at the form of his watcher, who was hidden from the most persistent gaze by the thick, soft coverlid that reached to the topknot of his nightcap.

"Ah!" said the king, "alas!" Lamartinière heard him; but as an interjection may sometimes escape a sleeping man, there is no reason why it should wake another.

So the surgeon continued to snore.

"How lucky he is to be able to sleep like that!" muttered Louis XV. "What material creatures these doctors are!"

And he resigned himself to wait still longer; but, after waiting in vain for a quarter of an hour, he called, —

"Hé! Lamartinière!"

"What is it, sire?" growled His Majesty's adviser.

"Oh! my poor Lamartinière!" said the king, groaning as piteously as he could.

"Well! what is it?"

And the doctor, still grumbling like a man who is sure that he can safely presume upon his position, slipped out of bed.

He found the king sitting up in bed.

"Are you in pain, sire?" he asked.

"I think so, my dear Lamartinière," His Majesty replied.

"Oho! you are slightly excited."

"Very much excited, yes."

"At what?"

"I have no idea."

"I know," muttered the surgeon; "it 's fear."

"Feel my pulse, Lamartinière."

"That 's what I am doing."

"How is it?"

"It marks eighty-eight pulsations a minute, sire, and that is a good many in an old man."

"In an old man, Lamartinière?"

"To be sure."

"I am only sixty-four, and at sixty-four a man 's not old."

"He is no longer young, certainly."

"Well, what do you prescribe?"

"First of all, how do you feel?"

"It seems to me that I am stifling with the heat."

"On the contrary, you are cold."

"I must be flushed, am I not?"

"Nonsense, you are pale. Let me give you some advice, sire."

"What is it?"

"Try to go to sleep again; that would be the proper thing."

"I am no longer sleepy."

"What is the meaning of this excitement?"

"*Dame!* it seems to me that you ought to know, Lamartinière, or else it is hardly worth while to be a doctor."

"Have you had a bad dream?"

"Well, yes, I have."

"A dream!" cried Lamartinière, throwing up his hands; "a dream!"

"*Dame!*" rejoined the king. "There are such things as dreams."

"Very good! come, tell me your dream, sire."

"That 's one of the things that is n't told, my friend."

"Why so? People tell everything."

"To their confessors, yes."

"Then send me for your confessor at once; and I 'll bring my lancet too."

"A dream is sometimes a secret."

"Yes, and sometimes it 's caused by remorse. You are right, sire; adieu."

And the doctor began to pull on his stockings and his breeches.

"Come, come, Lamartinière, don't be angry, my

friend. Well! I dreamed — I dreamed that I was being carried to Saint-Denis."

"And that it was an uncomfortable carriage. Bah! when you take that trip, you won't notice the carriage, sire."

"How can you joke on such subjects?" said the king, shuddering from head to foot. "No, I dreamed that I was being carried to Saint-Denis, and that I was confined alive in the velvet lining of my coffin."

"You felt uncomfortable in the coffin?"

"Yes, a little."

"Vapors, bile, sluggish digestion."

"Oh! I did n't sup yesterday."

"An empty stomach then."

"Do you think so?"

"Ah! now I think of it, at what time did you leave Madame la Comtesse yesterday?"

"I have n't seen her for two days."

"You are sulking, eh? Bile, you see."

"No, no! she is sulking with me. I promised her something that I have n't given her."

"Give her that something quickly, and recover your good spirits."

"No, I am drowned in melancholy."

"Ah! I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"Breakfast with Monsieur de Chauvelin."

"Breakfast!" cried the king. "That was a very good thing to do in the days when I had an appetite."

"Bless my soul!" cried the surgeon, folding his arms. "You will have none of your mistress; you 'll have none of your friends; you 'll have none of your breakfast. And you imagine that I 'll allow that, do you? Well, sire, I tell you one thing, and that is

that, if you change your habits, you are a doomed man."

"My friend makes me yawn, Lamartinière; my mistress puts me to sleep; my breakfast chokes me."

"The deuce! decidedly, you must be sick then."

"Ah! Lamartinière," cried the king, "I was happy a long while."

"And you complain of that? That is human gratitude."

"No, I don't complain of the past, certainly not, but of the present. The carriage wears out by use."

And the king heaved a sigh.

"True, it does wear out," the surgeon repeated sententiously.

"So that the springs refuse to work," sighed the king; "and I long for repose."

"Well, go to sleep, then!" cried Lamartinière, going back to bed.

"Let me go on with my metaphor, my dear doctor."

"Can I be mistaken, and are you turning poet, sire? Another villainous disease that!"

"No; on the contrary, you know that I detest poets. To please Madame de Pompadour I made that wretch Voltaire a gentleman; but on the day when he presumed to thee-and-thou me and call me Titus or Trajan, I put a stop to that sort of thing. I intended to say, without poetry, that I think it is time for me to put on the drag."

"Do you wish to know my opinion, sire?"

"Yes, my friend."

"Well then, don't put on the drag, but unharness the horses."

"That's a harsh remedy," murmured Louis XV.

"It is the only true one, sire. When I address the

king I call him Your Majesty. When I turn over my patient I don't even call him monsieur. Unharness, therefore, sire, and at once. Now that the matter is decided, we still have an hour and a half to sleep, sire, so let us sleep."

The surgeon drew the coverlid over him once more, and five minutes later was snoring in such plebeian fashion that the walls of the Blue Chamber gnashed their teeth with indignation.

V.

THE KING'S MORNING RECEPTION.

THE king, left to himself, did not attempt to disturb the obstinate doctor, whose slumber, being as well regulated as a clock, lasted just as long as he had announced.

The clock had struck half-past six. As the valet de chambre entered the room, Lamartinière rose and went into an adjoining closet while his bed was being removed.

There he wrote a prescription for the physicians on duty for the day, and disappeared.

The king ordered that his regular attendants should be admitted first and then those who had the *grandes entrées*.

He saluted silently, then gave his legs to the valets de chambre, who drew on his stockings, fastened his garters, and arrayed him in his dressing-gown.

Then he knelt before his prie-Dieu, sighing several times amid the general silence.

Every one had knelt with the king and prayed as he was doing, thinking of other things.

The king turned from time to time toward the balustrade where the most intimate and most favored of his courtiers were ordinarily assembled.

"Whom is the king looking for?" the Duc de Richelieu and the Duc d'Ayen asked each other in an undertone.

"Not for us, for he would find us," said the Duc d'Ayen; "but see, the king is rising!"

Louis XV. had, in fact, finished his prayer, or had been so distraught, rather, that he had not said it.

"I do not see monsieur the keeper of the wardrobe," said Louis XV., casting his eyes about.

"Monsieur de Chauvelin?" asked the Duc de Richelieu.

"Yes."

"But he is here, sire."

"Where, pray?"

"There," said the duke, turning round. "Aha!" he added suddenly, as if in surprise.

"What is it?" demanded the king.

"Monsieur de Chauvelin is still praying."

In truth the Marquis de Chauvelin, that entertaining heathen, that jovial accomplice in the petty royal sacrileges, that witty adversary of the gods in general and of God in particular, had remained on his knees, not only contrary to his usual custom, but also, contrary to etiquette, the king having finished his prayer.

"Well, marquis," queried the king with a smile, "are you asleep?"

The marquis rose slowly to his feet, crossed himself, and saluted Louis XV. with profound respect.

Every one was in the habit of laughing when Monsieur de Chauvelin chose to laugh; they supposed that he was joking and laughed from force of habit, the king with the rest. But he resumed his serious demeanor almost immediately.

"Come, come, marquis," he said, "you know that I am not fond of jesting on sacred subjects. However, as I presume that you wish to cheer me up a little, I forgive you because of the intention; but I warn you that you have a hard task," he added with a sigh, "for I am as depressed as death."

"You are depressed, sire?" said the Duc d'Ayen. "I pray to know what can have happened to depress Your Majesty?"

"My health, duke! my health, which is failing me! I make Lamartinière sleep in my bedroom to encourage me; but the fiend makes it his business to frighten me instead. Luckily every one seems inclined to laugh here. Is n't that so, Chauvelin?"

But the king's lures produced no result. The Marquis de Chauvelin himself, whose intelligent, mocking features were usually so quick to reflect the master's playful mood, who was so perfect a courtier that he never failed to respond to a desire on the king's part, on this occasion, instead of responding to Louis XV.'s expressed craving for even a trifling distraction, remained gloomy and severe, entirely absorbed by inexplicable gravity.

Some of those present — such gloom was so foreign to all Monsieur de Chauvelin's ways — some, we say, believed that the marquis was keeping up the jest, and that his gravity would end in a gorgeous display of hilarity. But the king had not the patience to wait that morning; he began therefore a determined assault upon his friend's melancholy.

"Why, what in the devil is the matter with you, Chauvelin?" he demanded; "are you going on with my dream of last night? Do you also propose to have yourself buried alive?"

"Oh! oh! has Your Majesty been dreaming about such villainous things as that?" asked Richelieu.

"Yes, I had the nightmare, duke. But, upon my word, I should be very glad not to find, when I wake, a state of things that I can endure when I am asleep. Come! Chauvelin, tell me what 's the matter with you?"

The marquis bowed without replying.

"Speak, speak, I tell you; I insist upon it!" cried the king.

"Sire," replied the marquis, "I am reflecting."

"Reflecting about what?" demanded Louis in amazement.

"God, sire!"

"God?"

"Yes, sire. God — is the beginning of wisdom."

That cold, monkish preamble made the king start; and, upon looking more attentively at the marquis, he detected in his worn, haggard features the probable explanation of his unaccustomed depression.

"The beginning of wisdom?" he said. "Ah! indeed, I shall not be surprised if that beginning never has any sequel; it 's too tiresome. But you were not reflecting about God all by himself. What else were you reflecting about?"

"My wife and children, whom I have not seen for a long while, sire."

"True, true, Chauvelin; you are married and have children. I had forgotten it, and so had you, too, I should say, for this is the first time you have ever mentioned it during these fifteen years that we have seen each other every day. Oh, well! if you have a fancy to see the domestic kettle boil, send for them; I 've no objection. Your apartments at the château are large enough, I imagine."

"Sire," replied the marquis, "Madame de Chauvelin lives in strict retirement, devoted to the duties of religion, and — "

"And she would be scandalized, eh, by the goings on at Versailles? I understand. She is like my daughter Louise, whom I cannot induce to leave Saint-

Denis. In that case I can see no remedy, my dear marquis."

"I ask the king's pardon; there is one."

"What is that?"

"My term of service ends this evening. If the king would permit me to go to Grosbois to pass a few days with my family — "

"You are jesting, marquis; leave me?"

"I will return, sire; but I should not like to die without having made some testamentary arrangements."

"Die! what a devil of a man! Die! how he says it! How old are you, marquis, pray?"

"Ten years younger than your majesty, sire, although I seem to be ten years older."

The king turned his back on the humorist, and turned to the Duc de Coigny, who was standing very near his raised platform.

"Ah! there you are, Monsieur le Duc," he said. "You come most opportunely; we were speaking of you the other evening at supper. Is it true that you entertained poor Gentil-Bernard in my château of Choisy? That would be a good action for which I should praise you heartily. However, if all the governors of my châteaux did the same, and offered an asylum to poets who had gone mad, there would be no resource left for me but to go and live at Bicêtre. How is the poor fellow?"

"Still very badly off, sire."

"And how did the trouble come upon him?"

'From having amused himself a little too much heretofore, sire, and especially from having very recently tried to play the young man."

"Yes, yes, I understand. *Dame!* he is very old."

"I ask the king's pardon, sire, but he is only a year older than Your Majesty."

"Upon my word, this is beyond endurance," said the king, turning his back on the Duc de Coigny. "Not only are they all as melancholy as catafalques to-day, but they 're as stupid as geese."

The Duc d'Ayen, one of the cleverest men of that clever age, detected the king's increasing ill-humor, and feared that he might be spattered by it; and so, having determined to put an end to it at the earliest possible moment, he stepped forward to attract the king's attention. He wore on his doublet, around his garters, and around the edge of his coat, gold embroidery, so broad and conspicuous that it could not fail to catch the eye. The monarch noticed it.

"By my troth! Duc d'Ayen," he exclaimed, "you are as resplendent as a sun. Have you been robbing a caravan, pray? I thought all the makers of embroidery in Paris were ruined since the marriage of the Comte de Provence, when not a single courtier paid them, and which messieurs the princes did not see fit to attend, for lack of money or of credit, I doubt not."

"And so they are, sire, altogether ruined."

"Who, the princes, the makers of embroidery, or the courtiers?"

"Why, all of them to some extent, I fancy; but the embroidery people are more shrewd, they will come out whole."

"How so?"

"By virtue of this new invention." And he pointed to his own embroideries.

"I don't understand."

"Why, coats embroidered in this way, sire, are called *à la chancelière*."

"I understand still less."

"There is one method of explaining the enigma to

Your Majesty, — to quote the verses that those idiotic Parisians have concocted, — but I don't dare."

"*You* don't dare, duke!" said the king smiling.

"Faith! no, sire; I await the king's order."

"I give you the order."

"The king will remember, of course, that I am simply obeying orders. These are the verses: —

"'On fait certain galons de nouvelle matière;
Mais ils ne sont que pour jours de galas,
On les nomme à la chancelière.
Pourquoi? C'est qu'ils sont faux et ne rougissent pas.'" [1]

The courtiers exchanged glances, amazed at such excessive audacity, and all turned at the same moment toward Louis XV., in order to model their faces upon his. The Chancellor Maupeou, then in high favor, being supported by the favorite, was so exalted a personage that no one dared listen to the epigrams against him which succeeded one another in an endless stream. The monarch smiled, and immediately every mouth was wreathed in smiles. He made no reply, so no one said a word.

Louis XV. had a strange temperament. He was horribly afraid of death, and he did not wish anybody to mention his death to him. But on every occasion he took a sort of delight in laughing at the tendency that almost all men exhibit to conceal their age or their infirmities. He delighted to say to a courtier, —

"You are an old man, you don't look well, you will die soon."

[1] They are making gold lace of a new material;
But it is for use only on gala days.
It is called lace *à la chancelière*.[1]
Why? Because it is false and does not blush.

[1] *Chancelière*, — the chancellor's wife.

He was philosophical withal, and on that very day on which he had twice received cruel thrusts, he exposed himself to the risk of a third.

To resume his interrupted conversation with the Duc d'Ayen, he said to him abruptly,—

"How is the Chevalier de Noailles? Is it true that he is ill?"

"We had the misfortune to lose him yesterday, sire."

"Ah! I told him it was coming."

Then, glancing around the circle of courtiers, now increased by those who had the *petites entrées*, he noticed the Abbé de Broglio, a man of a surly disposition and brusque manners. He addressed him thus: —

"It 's your turn next, abbé. You are just two days younger than he."

"Sire," retorted Monsieur de Broglio, white with rage, "Your Majesty hunted yesterday. A storm came up. The king got wet like the rest."

He made a path for himself through the throng, and left the room in a towering passion.

The king looked after him with a melancholy expression, and remarked,—

"That is the way that Abbé de Broglio always acts; he loses his temper continually."

Then, noticing his physician Bonnard at the door, and with him Bordeu, a protégé of Madame du Barry, who aspired to take his place, he called them both.

"Come, messieurs; the talk is all of death here this morning, and that interests you. Which of you will find the fountain of Jouvence for us? That would be a marvel indeed, and would assure his fortune, I will answer for it. Are you the man, Bordeu? I can understand that you, Æsculapius in attendance upon Venus,

have not as yet had occasion to think about patching and repairing the human frame."

"I ask the king's pardon, but I have, on the contrary, a system which should take us back to those halycon days."

"Of fable!" interrupted Bonnard, with an expression of disgust.

"Do you think so," said the king, "do you think so, my poor Bonnard? The fact is that, under your guidance, my youth is no longer anything but a very unpalatable fable, and the man who should give me back my youth would be historiographer of France by the same token; for he would have written the fairest pages of my reign. Make it a cure deserving of the greatest celebrity, Bordeu. Meanwhile, feel Monsieur de Chauvelin's pulse, for he is pale and depressed. Give me your opinion as to his health, which is most precious to our enjoyment — and to my heart," he added hastily.

Chauvelin smiled bitterly as he bared his wrist for the doctor.

"Which of you two, messieurs?" he asked.

"Let both of them feel it," laughed Louis XV., "but not Lamartinière. He is just the man to predict apoplexy, as he did to me."

"Very good, you, Monsieur Bonnard; the past before the future. What is your opinion?"

"Monsieur le marquis is very ill; the blood-vessels of the brain are full and obstructed; he would do well to be bled, and that very soon."

"And you, Monsieur Bordeu?"

"I beg my learned confrère to excuse me; but I am obliged to differ from his experience. Monsieur le marquis has a nervous pulse. If I were talking to a pretty woman, I should say that she had the vapors. He needs

cheerful scenes, repose, no worry, no business cares, complete contentment; in short, everything that he finds at the court of the august monarch, whose friend he has the honor to be. I prescribe a continuation of the same régime."

"There are two valuable opinions, and Monsieur de Chauvelin ought to be thoroughly enlightened by them. My poor marquis, if you die, Bordeu is a disgraced man."

"No, sire, the vapors kill when they are not attended to."

"If I die, sire," replied Monsieur de Chauvelin, "I pray to God that it may be at your feet."

"Do nothing of the sort, you would frighten me terribly. But is n't it the hour for mass? I think I see Monsieur the Bishop of Senez, and Monsieur the Curé of Saint-Louis, our parish. Now, I shall certainly get a little consolation. Good-morning, Monsieur le Curé, how goes your flock? Are there many sick and poor?"

"Alas! sire, there are very many."

"But are not alms abundant? Has the price of bread gone up? Has the number of unfortunates increased?"

"Ah! yes, sire."

"How does it happen? Where do they come from?"

"Sire, even the footmen in your household come to me for charity."

"I can well believe it, for they are not paid. Do you hear, Monsieur de Richelieu? Can you not arrange that? Deuce take it! You are first gentleman-in-waiting for the year."

"Sire, the footmen are not in my department; that is a matter for the intendant-general to attend to."

"And he will send it on to some one else. Poor fellows!" said the king, moved to pity for an instant; "but after all I cannot do everything. Do you go with

us to mass, bishop?" he added, turning to Abbé de Beauvais, Bishop of Senez, who was the Lenten preacher at court.

"I am at Your Majesty's service," replied the bishop bowing; "but I have listened to words of grave import here. You talk of death and no one thinks seriously about it; no one reflects that it comes in its own good time, when it is not expected, that it comes upon us in the midst of our pleasures, that it mows down great and small with its inexorable scythe. No one reflects that there comes a time of life when repentance and penance are as much a necessity as a duty, when the fires of concupiscence should die away before the great thought of salvation."

"Richelieu," the king interrupted with a smile, "it seems to me that monsieur the bishop is throwing a good many stones into your garden."

"Yes, sire, and he throws them with such force that they rebound into the park of Versailles."

"Ah! well answered, Monsieur le Duc; you are still as quick at repartee as you were at twenty years of age. The discourse begins well, my dear bishop, and we will hear the rest of it Sunday, in the chapel. I promise to listen. Chauvelin, we excuse you from attending us, in order to brighten you up a bit. Go and wait for me at the countess'," he added, in an undertone. "She has received her famous golden mirror, Rotiers' chef-d'œuvre. You must see it."

"I prefer to go to Grosbois, sire."

"Again! you are in your dotage, my dear fellow; go and see the countess, she will disenchant you. To mass, messieurs! to mass! This day begins very badly. That is what it is to grow old!"

VI.

MADAME DU BARRY'S MIRROR.

THE marquis, in order to obey the king's command, betook himself to the favorite's apartments despite his repugnance to do so.

The favorite was in a seventh heaven of delight. She was dancing about like a child, and as soon as Monsieur le Marquis de Chauvelin was announced, she ran to him and cried, without giving him time to speak, —

"Oh, my dear marquis, my dear marquis, you come just in the nick of time! I am the happiest woman in the world to-day! I had the most delightful waking you can imagine! In the first place Rotiers sent me my mirror. That 's what you came to see, of course; but we must wait for the king. And then, as good luck always comes in showers, the famous carriage has arrived, the carriage Monsieur d'Aiguillon has given me, you know."

"Oh, yes," said the marquis. "The *vis-à-vis* everybody is talking about. He owed you that, madame."

"Oh! I know that people are talking about it. *Mon Dieu!* I even know what they say about it."

"Really, do you know everything?"

"Yes, almost; but I snap my fingers at it, you understand! Look, here are some verses I found this very morning in the pockets of the *vis-à-vis*. I might

have the poor saddler arrested, but pshaw! That sort of thing was all right for Madame de Pompadour. I am too well pleased to think about revenge. Besides, it seems to me that the verses are n't bad, and if they would always treat me so, on my word of honor, I would n't complain."

And she handed the verses to Monsieur de Chauvelin. Monsieur de Chauvelin took them and read them: —

"Pourquoi ce brillant vis-à-vis ?
Est-ce le char d'une déesse
Ou de quelque jeune princesse ?
S'écriait un badaud surpris.
Non — de la foule curieuse
Lui répond un caustique, non,
C'est le char de la blanchisseuse,
De cet infâme D'Aiguillon !" [1]

And the reckless courtesan roared with laughter. Then she continued: —

"*Of that infamous D'Aiguillon*, you see, *his laundress*. Ah! on my word, the author is right, and he does n't say too much. Except for me, in truth, the poor duke, notwithstanding the flour he covered himself with at the battle of — I never can remember the names of battles — except for me, the poor duke would still be frightfully black. But pshaw! What does it matter, as my predecessor, Monsieur de Mazarin,

[1] "Why this gorgeous *vis-à-vis* ?
Is it some goddess' chariot,
Or that of a fair young princess ? "
Cried a gaping, wondering lout.
"No" — from the throng of curious bystanders
A caustic wit made answer — "no,
'T is the chariot of the laundress
Of that infamous D'Aiguillon!"

used to say, *they sing and they pay;* and a single panel of my *vis-à-vis* is worth more than all the epigrams against me that have been made in four years. I will show it to you. Come, marquis, follow me."

And the countess, forgetting that she was no longer Jeanne Vaubernier, and forgetting the marquis' age, tripped singing down the steps of a secret staircase leading to a small courtyard where the carriage-houses were.

"Look," she said to the marquis, who was panting for breath, "is that very bad for a laundress' carriage?"

The marquis was speechless. Nothing more magnificent and more refined at once had ever met his gaze. On the four principal panels were the arms of the Du Barrys, with the famous war-cry, *Boute en avant.*

Upon each of the side-panels was a basket of roses on which two doves were tenderly pecking at each other, the whole varnished with the Martin varnish, the secret of which is lost now.

The carriage cost fifty-six thousand francs.

"Has the king seen the superb gift, Madame la Comtesse?" asked the Marquis de Chauvelin.

"Not yet, but I am sure of one thing."

"Of what are you sure? let us hear."

"That he will be charmed with it."

"Oho!"

"Why that oho?"

"Because I doubt it."

"You doubt it?"

"I will even go so far as to bet that he will not allow you to accept it."

"Why not?"

"Because you could not use it."

"Oh! indeed?" she retorted ironically. "Are you astonished by such a small matter?"

"Yes."

"You shall see something very different then; both the golden mirror and this," she added, taking a paper from her pocket. "But no, you sha'n't see this."

"As you please, madame," rejoined the marquis bowing.

"However, you 're the king's oldest friend, next to that old monkey of a Richelieu. You know him well. He listens to you. You could help me, if you chose, and in that case — come up to my closet again, marquis."

"At your service, madame."

"You are very disagreeable to-day. Pray, what is the matter with you?"

"I am sad, madame."

"Ah! so much the worse. That 's foolish!"

And Madame du Barry, acting as the marquis' guide, ascended with a more sedate step the secret staircase which she had just descended, light of foot and singing like a bird.

She returned to her closet, Monsieur de Chauvelin still following her. Then she closed the door and said, turning quickly to the marquis, —

"You do not care for me, do you, Chauvelin?"

"You cannot doubt my respect and my devotion, madame."

"Will you serve me against everybody?"

"Against everybody except the king."

"In any event, if you don't approve of what you are going to hear, you will remain neutral."

"I will agree to do so if you demand it."

"Give me your word."

"On the word of Chauvelin!"

"Read then."

And the countess handed him the most extraordinary, most audacious, most ridiculous composition that ever was placed before the eyes of a gentleman. The marquis did not understand at first its full scope.

It was a petition addressed to the pope for the annulment of her marriage to Comte du Barry, on the pretext that, as she had been his brother's mistress, and as any sort of alliance was forbidden by the canons under such circumstances, the marriage was necessarily void. She added that, having been informed immediately after the ceremony was performed of the sacrilege she was on the point of committing, of which she had had no suspicion before, she had been stricken with fear, and the marriage had not been consummated.

The marquis read the petition twice over, then handed it back to the countess, and asked her what she intended to do with it.

"Why, send it, of course," she replied with her usual effrontery.

"To whom?"

"To its address."

"To the pope?"

"To the pope."

"And then?"

"You cannot guess?"

"No."

"Great heaven! how hard your head is to-day!"

"That may be; but it 's a fact that I cannot guess."

"Did you think, pray, that I had no object in patronizing Madame de Montesson? Have you forgotten the grand dauphin and Mademoiselle Choin, Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon? People are crying to the king all day to imitate his illustrious

ancestor. After this they 'll have nothing to say. I 'm as good as the Widow Scarron, I imagine; and I 'm not sixty years old into the bargain."

"O madame, madame! what do I hear?" exclaimed Monsieur de Chauvelin, turning pale and stepping back.

At that moment the door opened and Zamore announced, —

"The king!"

"The king!" cried Madame du Barry, seizing Monsieur de Chauvelin's hand; "the king! not a word. We will continue this subject another time."

The king entered.

His eyes rested first on Madame du Barry, and yet he spoke first to the marquis.

"Ah! Chauvelin! Chauvelin!" he cried, impressed by the agitation visible on the marquis' features, "do you really propose to die for good and all? Upon my word you look like a ghost, my friend."

"Die! Monsieur de Chauvelin die!" laughed the heedless young woman. "Oh, no! I forbid him to do it. In heaven's name, sire, do you forget the horoscope that was cast for him five years ago at the fair of the Loges de Saint-Germain?"

"What horoscope?" the king asked.

"Must I repeat it?"

"Certainly."

"You don't believe in horoscopes, I trust, sire."

"No, but tell it all the same, whether I believe in them or not."

"Well, some one predicted that Monsieur de Chauvelin would die two months before Your Majesty."

"Who was the fool who predicted that?" queried the king with some uneasiness.

"A very clever sorcerer, the same who told me — "

"That is all nonsense," interrupted the king with well-marked impatience. "Let us see the mirror."

"In that case, sire, we must go into the adjoining room."

"Let us go there."

"Show us the way, sire. You know it. It is your very humble servant's bedroom." The king did in fact know the way, and he went first.

The mirror was on the toilet table, covered with a thick veil, which fell at a word from the king, disclosing a veritable masterpiece worthy of Benvenuto Cellini. The mirror, in a solid gold frame, was surmounted by two Cupids in relief, holding a royal crown, beneath which the head of the person who happened to be looking into the mirror naturally took its place.

"Ah! that 's a magnificent thing!" cried the king. "Really, Rotiers has surpassed himself. I will congratulate him. Countess, I give you this, you understand."

"You give me the whole thing?"

"Of course."

"Mirror and frame?"

"Mirror and frame."

"Including that?" added the countess with a siren's smile that staggered the marquis, especially after what he had just read, for she was pointing to the royal crown.

"That plaything?" said the king.

The countess nodded.

"Oh! you can amuse yourself with that as much as you please, countess; but, I give you fair warning, it is heavy. Come, come, Chauvelin, won't you smoooth out your wrinkles even in madame's presence, and in

presence of her mirror, which is a double favor she accords you, as in that way you see her twice?"

The royal flattery was rewarded by a kiss from the countess.

The marquis did not relax.

"What do you think of the mirror, marquis? Come, tell us your opinion."

"For what purpose, sire?"

"Why, because you are a man of good taste, *pardieu!*"

"I should have preferred not to see it."

"Bah! why so?"

"Because then I could at least have denied its existence."

"What does that mean?"

"Sire, the royal crown is ill-placed in the hands of Cupids," replied the marquis, bowing low.

Madame du Barry became purple with wrath.

The king, deeply embarrassed, tried to look as if he did not understand.

"Why, on the contrary, those Cupids are lovely," he rejoined. "They hold the crown with such grace as never was seen. Look at their little arms, how gracefully rounded they are. Would not one say they were carrying a garland of flowers?"

"That is their proper employment, sire. Cupids are good for nothing else."

"Cupids are good for everything, Monsieur de Chauvelin," said the countess. "You used not to doubt it; but at your age a man forgets such things."

"To be sure, and it is proper for young people like me to remember them," laughed the king. "So the mirror does not please you?"

"It is not the mirror, sire."

"What in heaven's name is it then? Can it be the

charming face that is reflected in it? The devil! you are hard to please, marquis."

"On the contrary, no one pays more sincere homage to madame's beauty."

"But," interposed Madame du Barry, testily, "if it 's not the mirror nor the face reflected in it, what is it? Tell us."

"It is the position it occupies."

"Why, does n't it look wonderfully well on this toilet table, which, like it, is a gift from His Majesty?"

"It would look better elsewhere."

"Where, in God's name? For you annoy me with this air that no one ever saw you adopt before."

"In madame la dauphine's apartments, madame."

"What?"

"Yes, the crown with the fleurs-de-lis can be worn only by one who has been, is, or will be queen of France."

Madame du Barry's eyes flashed fire.

The king frowned threateningly.

Then he rose saying, —

"You are right, Marquis de Chauvelin. Your mind is diseased. Go and seek repose at Grosbois, as you are so unhappy with us. Go, marquis, go."

Monsieur de Chauvelin made no other reply than a low bow, and walked backward from the room as he would have done from the state apartments at Versailles; and, mindful of the rigid rule of etiquette that forbids saluting any person whomsoever in the king's presence, he went out without so much as glancing at the countess.

The countess gnawed her nails with rage. The king tried to soothe her.

"Poor Chauvelin!" he said. "He must have had some such dream as I had. In truth all strong minds surrender at the first touch of the black angel's wing. Chauvelin is ten years younger than I, and I still claim to be a better man than he."

"Oh! yes, sire, you are a better man than anybody in the world. You are cleverer than your ministers and younger than your children."

The king beamed at that last compliment, which he did his best to deserve, despite Lamartinière's advice.

VII.

THE MONK, THE TUTOR, THE STEWARD.

On the day following that on which the king had given Monsieur de Chauvelin permission to retire to his estates, the Marquise de Chauvelin was walking in the park at Grosbois with her children and their tutor.

A saint-like, noble woman, left in oblivion in the shade of those great oaks by the corruption that had devoured France for fifty years past, Madame de Chauvelin still retained her hold upon God who blessed her, her children who loved her, and her servants who worshipped her.

She gave God her prayers, returned the love of her children, and was charitable to her neighbor.

Always interested in the pursuits of her husband, she followed him with her thoughts on the tempestuous stage of the court, as the sailor's wife follows with her heart her poor husband wandering amid storm and fog.

The marquis had loved his wife dearly. Having become a courtier and a favorite, he had never hazarded his last stake in the game which kings always win against their favorites, — the joys of domestic life, the last, pure flame upon which he smiled from afar. The seaman of whom we spoke just now kept watch of that family love as the shipwrecked man watches the light-house. He hoped to warm himself after the squall at his own always blazing, always joyous fireside.

It should be said to Monsieur de Chauvelin's credit that he had never compelled the marchioness to come to Versailles to live.

The pious creature would have obeyed. She would have sacrificed herself. But the marquis had never broached the subject to her but once.

At the first sign of regret that appeared in his wife's eyes he said no more. It was not, as evil-minded people said, that Monsieur de Chauvelin was afraid of his wife's sermons. Every rake, every courtier who crawled at the feet of the concubine or the monarch could muster sufficient courage to browbeat his wife and scold his children.

No, Monsieur de Chauvelin had left the marchioness to her devout reflections.

"I am laying up enough acres of land in hell," he said. "I will let the excellent marchioness secure a few inches of azure for me in heaven."

He was hardly even seen at Grosbois. His wife made a holiday for him every year when he arrived at Saint-André.

The programme never varied. Monsieur de Chauvelin kissed his children at two o'clock, dined with his family, entered his carriage at six, and was present at the king's *coucher*.[1]

For four years he had done nothing more than that. In four years he had touched his lips four times to the marchioness' hand. On New Year's Day his sons went to Versailles with their governor to see him.

Monsieur de Chauvelin intrusted his wife with the education of their children. Abbé V——, a scholarly

[1] The *coucher* was the reception held by the king when he retired, as the *lever* was the one attending his rising in the morning.

young man who had not yet received orders, but who was called abbé by courtesy, zealously seconded the efforts of the marchioness, and gave all his time as well as all his heart to the young children abandoned by their father.

Life was gentle and pleasant at Grosbois. The marchioness divided her time between the management of her fortune, which was placed in the hands of an old steward named Bonbonne, the most rigid observance of all the religious duties enjoined by austere piety, whose impulses were guided by an adroit spiritual director, Père Delar, a Camaldule monk, and the education of her two children, who promised to bear worthily a name made illustrious by great services rendered to the state.

Sometimes a letter, dashed off by the marquis in his hours of disgust, arrived to console his family, and to revive in the marchioness' heart an affection which she often reproached herself for not giving entirely to God.

Madame de Chauvelin still loved her husband, and when she had prayed all day Père Delar would call her attention to the fact that she had spoken to God of her beloved husband exclusively.

The marchioness had reached a point where she had ceased to expect or to hope for her husband on earth. She flattered herself, like the good, pious creature she was, that she deserved well enough of God to be permitted to join Monsieur de Chauvelin in the abode of everlasting joy.

The Camaldule looked sour at Monsieur Bonbonne and Monsieur Bonbonne at Abbé V——, when the children, being a little out of sorts or compelled to do penance, seemed to regret their father, although they knew him so little.

"It must be confessed," the monk would say to his penitent, "that that life will damn Monsieur de Chauvelin."

"It must be confessed," the old steward would say, "that the race he is running will ruin the family."

"Let us agree," the governor would say, "that these children will never attain glory, having never known what emulation is."

And the angelic marchioness would smile at all three, replying to the monk that Monsieur de Chauvelin would redeem himself in time; to the steward that the savings effected at Grosbois would relieve the faintness of the strong-box which had been bled so freely at Paris; to the tutor, that the children came of good stock, and that good blood is incapable of lying.

And during all this time the centenary oaks and the fragile nurslings were growing at Grosbois, alike deriving their sap and their life from the fruitful bosom of God.

An unhappy day arrived. On that day the flowers in the park, the fruit in the garden, the waters of the basin, and the very stones of the château withered and became bitter and gloomy. It was a day of confusion in the family. The steward Bonbonne presented accounts of a terrifying nature to the marchioness, and predicted ruin for her children if Monsieur de Chauvelin did not make haste to put his affairs in order.

"Madame," he said after breakfast, "allow me to say twenty words to you."

"Say on, my dear Bonbonne," the marchioness replied.

"Remember, madame," interposed Père Delar, "that I await you in the chapel."

"And I have the honor to remind Madame la

Marquise," said Abbé V——, "that we arranged for an examination to-day in mathematics and grammar. Otherwise these two young gentlemen will do no work."

The two Messieurs de Chauvelin were beginning to rebel against Latin and science on the pretext that their father did not care whether they were learned men or not.

The marchioness began by taking Père Delar's arm.

"Father," said she, "I will begin with you. My confession will be a short one, thank God! Here it is: Yesterday my mind wandered during divine service."

"Why so, my daughter?"

"Because I expected a letter from Monsieur de Chauvelin and it did not come."

"Be absolved, if that is all, my daughter."

"That is all," the marchioness replied with a seraphic smile.

The monk withdrew.

"And now for you, Monsieur l'Abbé. The examination would be long and painful. The children, if they complain, do not know their lessons. If they do not know them, and you should prove it to me, I should be compelled to scold them or punish them. Spare them and ourselves. Let us postpone the test to some day when it will be satisfactory to us all."

Monsieur l'abbé agreed that madame la marquise was right. He disappeared like the monk, who was already passing out of sight in the hazy depths of the green arcades.

"Now it is your turn, Bonbonne," said the marchioness. "You are the only one left. Shall I settle matters as easily with your forbidding expression and your deep sighs?"

"I doubt it."

"Ah! well, let us see?"

"It is a simple matter. My accounts are alarmingly true."

"Frighten me, if you can. You have never succeeded in frightening my private cash-box."

"Your cash-box will be frightened this month, madame. It will be more than frightened; it will die."

"Nonsense! have you taken me into the account too?" rejoined the marchioness, trying to jest.

"Have I taken you into the account? I should think so; that 's a terrible obstacle!"

"I have never, never said a word to any one, Bonbonne."

"Better if you had! But I had no need for you to speak to know all about it."

"About what?"

"The amount of your savings."

"I defy you to tell me!" cried the marchioness blushing.

"If that is so, I will go straight to the point. You have about seventy-five thousand francs."

"O Bonbonne!" said the marchioness in a grieved tone, as if the steward had indiscreetly discovered a painful secret.

"Madame la Marquise does not suspect me, I trust, of having meddled with her papers."

"If not — how?"

"How much have you a year for your housekeeping? Is it not thirty thousand francs?"

"Yes."

"How much do you spend? Twenty-four thousand, do you not?"

"Yes."

"And you have been hoarding the difference for ten years, have you not, as Monsieur de Chauvelin has been ten years at court?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then, madame, with the compound interest you have, or should have, about seventy-five thousand francs."

"Bonbonne!"

"I have guessed right. Now, if you have them, you will give them to Monsieur de Chauvelin at his first request. And if you give them to him, there will be nothing left for your children in case the marquis should be suddenly stricken."

"Bonbonne!"

"Let us speak frankly! Your property is pledged. Monsieur de Chauvelin is pledged for seven hundred thousand francs."

"He possesses sixteen hundred thousand."

"Very good. But the excess over seven hundred thousand francs will not satisfy his creditors."

"You frighten me!"

"I am trying to."

"For what purpose?"

"So that you will beg Monsieur de Chauvelin, who spends too much, to put in trust at once for the benefit of your children, the remaining nine hundred thousand francs; to beg him to assign them to you as a jointure, or to leave them to you by will."

"By will? great heaven!"

"There you are with your scruples! Need a man die because he makes a will?"

"To think of mentioning a will to Monsieur de Chauvelin!"

"That 's it! You are afraid of disturbing monsieur le marquis in his pleasure, in his digestion, in his favor at court, by those horrid words, *the future*, which always sound in happy moments like the word death. Ah! if you fear that, why, you will ruin your children; but you will have spared monsieur le marquis' ears."

"Bonbonne!"

"I am a talking column of figures. Listen to my accounts."

"It is horrible."

"It would be more horrible to wait for what I tell you is imminent. Play the part of a judicious adviser. Take your carriage and go to see monsieur le marquis."

"In Paris?"

"No, at Versailles."

"What! I, in the society my husband frequents? Never!"

"Write, then."

"Will he so much as read my letter? Alas! when I write to congratulate him or to tell him how I long for him, he does n't read what I write. What will he do when I take the pen as a man of business?"

"Let some friend do it then; myself, for instance."

"You?"

"Oh! do you mean to tell me that he won't listen to me? Oh! yes, madame, he will listen to me."

"You will make him ill, Bonbonne."

"His doctor will cure him."

"You will make him angry and anger will kill him."

"No, no! I am too anxious for him to live. If I kill him, it won't be until after I have made him write his will."

And the worthy man indulged in a loud laugh which wounded the marchioness.

"Bonbonne, if you speak so, I am the one you will kill," she murmured.

Bonbonne took her hand respectfully.

"Forgive me," he said. "I forgot myself, Madame la Marquise. Order the horses to be put to the carriage and I will start for Versailles."

"Ah! God be praised! You will take my books, and — but look!"

"What is it?"

"Can it be that my orders are anticipated?"

"How so?"

"You spoke of my carriage?"

"Yes."

"There it is in the Avenue du Mail."

"Ah!"

"The family livery."

"Those are monsieur le marquis' iron-gray horses."

"Madame, madame!" cried Abbé V——.

"Madame, madame!" cried Père Delar.

"Madame, madame!" cried twenty voices from the offices, the gardens, and the park.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried the children.

"Monsieur le marquis! oh, can it be true?" murmured the marchioness. "He at Grosbois to-day!"

"Good-morning, madame," said the marquis at a distance. His carriage had stopped, and he alighted joyously with eager gestures.

"It is himself, sound in body and cheerful in mind. I thank thee, O my God!"

"We thank thee, O God!" repeated the twenty voices which had announced the coming of the master and father.

VIII.

THE GAMBLER'S OATH.

It was the marquis himself. He affectionately embraced his two children, who had uttered cries of joy when they saw him, and he bestowed upon the hand of the bewildered marchioness a kiss that came from his heart.

"You, monsieur! you," she said, taking possession of his arm.

"Myself! But the children were playing or studying. I do not wish to interrupt their studies, much less their play."

"Ah! monsieur, let us allow them to enjoy your dear presence to the full during the short time they have to see you."

"God be thanked, madame, they will see me for a long time."

"A long time — until to-morrow evening — do you mean it? You will not go until to-morrow evening?"

"Better than that, madame."

"You will sleep two nights at Grosbois?"

"Two nights, four nights, always."

"O monsieur, what can have happened?" cried the marchioness eagerly, not reflecting that such surprise on her part might be construed as a reproach for Monsieur de Chauvelin's past conduct.

The marquis frowned for a moment, then suddenly asked, with a smile,—

"Have you not prayed God to bring me back to my family?"

"O monsieur, always!"

"Very well, madame, your prayers have been granted. It seemed to me that a voice was calling me and I obeyed that voice."

"And you have left the court?"

"I have come to make my home at Grosbois," the marquis replied, choking back a sigh.

"What happiness for the dear children, for myself, for all the servants! Ah! monsieur, allow me to believe that it is true, let me enjoy that felicity."

"Your satisfaction, madame, is a balm that cures all my wounds. But, tell me, are you willing to talk of household affairs a little?"

"By all means, by all means," said the marchioness, pressing his hands.

"It seemed to me that I saw some very sorry-looking horses by the postern of the half-moon; are they yours?"

"They are mine, monsieur."

"Horses too old for use!"

"They are the horses you gave me when our son was born, monsieur."

"They were four and a half then; that was nine years ago, so the beasts are fourteen years old. Fie! such a team for you, marchioness!"

"Ah, monsieur, when I go to mass, they succeed even now in running away."

"I saw three, I think."

"I gave the fourth, which is more spirited, to my son for his riding-lessons."

"My son learn to ride on a coach-horse! Marchioness, marchioness, what sort of a horseman will you make of him?"

The marchioness lowered her eyes.

"And do you no longer drive with four horses? You have eight, I think, and two saddle horses."

"True, monsieur; but as there are no hunting parties or riding parties during your absence, I reflected that by giving up four horses, two grooms, and a saddler, I could save six thousand francs a year."

"Six thousand francs, marchioness," murmured Monsieur de Chauvelin, ill-pleased.

"That is enough to board and lodge twelve families," she replied.

He took her hand.

"Always kind-hearted, always perfect! Whatever you do on earth is always inspired by God on high. But the Marquise de Chauvelin ought not to save money."

She raised her head.

"You mean to imply," he continued, "that I spend money freely. It is true, I do spend a great deal of money, and you are in want."

"I do not say that, monsieur."

"That must be the truth, marchioness. Noble and generous as you are, you would not have dismissed my servants unless from necessity. A groom discharged means one pauper more. You have been in want of money. I will talk with Bonbonne about it; but from this day forth you shall never be in that condition again. I will spend at Grosbois what I have spent at court, and instead of taking care of twelve families, you shall take care of two hundred."

"Monsieur —"

"And, I believe, thank God! that there will be grain enough left for twelve good horses which I own, and which will come to-morrow and live in your stables. Did you not say something about repairing the château?"

"The reception-rooms would need to be furnished anew."

"All my furniture from Paris will come this week. I will give dinner parties twice a week; we will hunt."

"You know, monsieur, that I am a little afraid of society," said the marchioness, alarmed at the idea of seeing all the uproarious friends from Versailles, whom she looked upon as her husband's capital sins.

"You shall name the guests yourself, marchioness. Now Bonbonne will give you the books; you will have the kindness to combine in one account the expenses at Paris and those at Grosbois."

The marchioness, wild with joy, tried to answer and could not. She took Monsieur de Chauvelin's hands, kissed them, probed the lowest depths of his soul with tear-dimmed eyes, and yielded to the blissful power of that warm atmosphere of pure love which penetrates everything it touches, and carries animation and a sense of well-being to the coldest extremities.

"Let us think of the children," he said; "how do you succeed in managing them?"

"Very well; the abbé is a bright man, his ideas are profound. Shall I present him to you?"

"Present all the household to me, yes, marchioness."

The marchioness waved her hand, and in a moment they saw the tutor approaching along the shady avenue where he had disappeared with the children; one of his hands rested on the shoulder of each child.

There was in the bearing and graceful motion of that young oak between the two reeds a something agreeably suggestive of the paternal relation, which pleased the marquis immensely.

"Monsieur l'abbé," said the marchioness, "let me tell

you some good news. Monsieur le Marquis here, our lord and master, proposes to remain with us."

"God be praised!" replied the abbé. "But alas! monsieur, can it be that the king is dead?"

"No, thank heaven! But I have bidden adieu to the court and the world. I remain here with my children. I am tired of living only in the mind and by ambition; I propose to try the heart for a while, so here I am among you. To begin with, monsieur l'abbé, are you satisfied with your pupils?"

"As well satisfied as it is possible to be, Monsieur le Marquis."

"So much the better. Make of them good Christians like their mother, upright men like their grandfather."

"And men of intellect, of merit, and of talent like their father," said the abbé. "I hope to accomplish all that."

"You are an invaluable man, then, abbé. And how are you, my old Bonbonne, — still a chronic grumbler? When I was no older than these boys you wanted to initiate me into the mysteries of business. I ought to have done as you wished, and then I should n't have been in such need of your experience to-day."

The children were dancing about on the grass with all the heedless gayety of their age. Their father followed their movements with an eye softened by emotion, and murmured, after a moment's silence, —

"Dear boys, I will never leave you again."

"May God grant that you speak the truth, Monsieur le Marquis!" said a grave, deep voice behind him.

Monsieur de Chauvelin turned and found himself facing a white-frocked monk, with a calm, stern face, who saluted him after the manner of monks.

"Who is this holy father?" the marquis asked his wife,

"Père Delar, my confessor."

"Ah! your confessor," he repeated, losing color somewhat. Then, in a lower tone, he added, "I need a confessor myself, and monsieur is most welcome."

The monk, an adroit man, and accustomed to the ways of the great, knew better than to comment on the remark, but he registered it in his memory. Having been advised of the condition of affairs some days before by the steward, he determined to undertake the negotiation, and not to let slip so promising an opportunity of attending to God's business, the marchioness', and, it might be, his own as well.

"May I venture to ask you for news of the king, Monsieur le Marquis?" queried the monk.

"Why so, father?"

"Because there is a rumor that Louis XV. is likely soon to render an account of his reign to God. Such rumors are ordinarily the precursors of Providence. His Majesty has not long to live, believe me."

"Is that your belief, father?" said Monsieur de Chauvelin, more and more depressed.

"It is much to be desired, therefore, that he amend his scandalous ways, that he repent—"

"Monsieur," the marquis hastily interrupted, "confessors should wait in silence until they are summoned."

"Death does not wait, monsieur, and I have long been awaiting a word from you, but it does not come."

"Oh! my confession will be a long one, but it is not yet ripe."

"Confession consists entirely in repentance, in regret for having sinned; and the greatest of all sins, as I have told you, is behavior that causes scandal."

"Oh! as for scandal, everybody causes more or less. There is not one of us who does not furnish food for evil-

speaking. Heaven does not intend to punish us for the lying tongues of other people."

"Heaven punishes disobedience to its laws, heaven punishes impertinence. It sends us warnings; if we neglect them nothing can save us."

Monsieur de Chauvelin did not reply, but seemed lost in reflection. The marchioness, seeing that the conversation was fairly inaugurated, discreetly withdrew, praying God with all her heart that it might bear fruit. After a long minute's silence, during which the monk watched him closely, Monsieur de Chauvelin turned abruptly to him.

"Look you, father," he said, "I believe that you are right. I repent of having been young too long, and I mean to confess to you, for I feel, I feel that death is near at hand."

"Death! you believe that death is near, and you take no steps to ensure your soul's salvation, or to arrange for the disposition of your fortune. You fear death, and yet you do not think of making the will which is indispensable in the condition of affairs which you have created for your heirs. Pardon me, Monsieur le Marquis, my zeal and my devotion to your illustrious family carry me over far perhaps."

"No, you are right once more, father; but, have no fear, the will is made; I have only to sign it."

"You fear death, and you are not in a condition to appear before God."

"May he have mercy on me! I was born in the Christian religion and I wish to die a Christian. Come to-morrow, I beg you, and we will continue this interview, which will give rest to my soul."

"To-morrow? why to-morrow? Death does not pause or turn back."

"I need to collect my thoughts. I can not forget so quickly the life I have led; perhaps I long for it. Thanks for your counsel, father; it will bear fruit."

"God grant it! but you know the wise man's motto: Never postpone till to-morrow what can be done to-day."

"I already owe you a debt of gratitude. I was cast down, you have raised me; everything cannot be done at once, father."

"Ah! Monsieur le Marquis," replied the monk bowing, "but a moment is required to make of the culprit a penitent; of the damned, one of the elect; if you choose — "

"Very good, very good, father, to-morrow. There is the dinner-bell."

He dismissed him with a gesture and walked hastily into one of the paths. The tutor approached Père Delar.

"What is the matter with monsieur le marquis? I should not know him; he, who was always so animated, is anxious, depressed, and haggard."

"He has a presentiment that his end is near, and he is thinking about mending his ways. It will be a magnificent conversion, and will bring much honor to my convent. Oh! if the king — "

"Aha! the appetite seems to come with eating, father. I fear, however, that your longings will remain unsatisfied in that direction. His Majesty is a hard man to convince, and then, too, he has his own converters. Monseigneur the Bishop of Senez is spoken of as a hardy champion."

"Oh! the king is n't so incredulous as you claim. Do you remember his illness at Metz, and the dismissal of Madame de Châteauroux? "

"Yes, but Louis XV. was young then, and it was not a question of dislodging Jeanne Vaubernier, — two considerations which make an immense difference. How-

ever, you have time enough to think about it, dear Monsieur Delar; meanwhile, as dinner has been announced, we must not keep monsieur le marquis waiting. He does n't dine with us often, God knows! "

The father, mother, and children were assembled at the dinner table, where Père Delar and Abbé V—— arrived in good time. The marchioness had never seemed so happy; never had she exerted herself to such good effect to do the honors of her table.

The cook had surpassed himself. Fine fish from the artificial ponds, fat chickens from the poultry-yard, the most luscious fruits of hothouse and garden reminded the marquis what excellent cheer the house afforded when a cherished master was to be entertained.

The valets, proud of the illustrious service they were about to resume, strutted about in their newest liveries, and watched the master's eyes for the slightest sign of a wish to be anticipated, of an annoyance to be guarded against.

But the marquis soon lost the hearty appetite of which he had boasted after his arrival; the table seemed deserted to him; the respectful, happy silence seemed to him the silence of deathly dulness. Gradually his heart and his features alike were invaded by melancholy; he let his inert hand fall beside his still laden plate, and forgot the glasses in which the wines of Aï and of Burgundy, thirty years old, sparkled in diamonds and rubies.

From melancholy the marquis arrived at downright despondency; every one followed with alarm the painful progress of his depression.

A tear suddenly started from his eyes and wrung a sigh from the marchioness. He did not notice it.

" I have been reflecting," he suddenly said to his wife. " I want to be buried, not at Boissy-Saint-Léger with my

father and mother, but in the Carmelite church on Place Maubert, Paris, with my ancestors."

"Why do you think about such things, monsieur? We have time enough for that, I imagine," said the marchioness, choked with grief.

"Who knows? Let some one call Bonbonne and tell him to wait for me in my large study. I propose to work with him for an hour. Père Delar pointed out to me the necessity of so doing. You have an excellent confessor in him, madame."

"I am happy that he meets your approval, monsieur; you can address yourself to him with perfect confidence."

"I will do so, and no later than to-morrow. With your permission, madame, I will go to my apartments."

The marchioness raised her eyes and thanked God in a mental prayer. She looked after her husband as he left the room with Bonbonne, and said, turning to her sons, —

"To-night, my children, ask God to inspire your father with the desire to remain permanently among us, to keep him in the same frame of mind in which he now is, and to give him grace to carry out his purposes."

"Come, my old Bonbonne," said the marquis when he was in his study, "to work, to work!"

He turned over all the papers with feverish eagerness, trying to identify and arrange them.

"There, there!" said the old man; "as we 're on the right road, my dear master, let us not go too fast; we lose time by going too fast, you know."

"Time presses, Bonbonne. I tell you, time presses."

"Nonsense."

"I tell you that the man to whom God grants the blessed joy of preparing for his last journey can never work quickly enough. Make haste, Bonbonne, let 's to work."

"At this rate, with this heat, monsieur, you will have pleurisy or congestion of the lungs or a sharp attack of fever, and in that way you will succeed in having your will made just in time."

"No more delay. Where is the account of receipts?"

"Here."

"And of outlay?"

"Here."

"Sixteen hundred thousand francs deficit? The devil!"

"Two years of economical living will fill the hole."

"I have n't two years to economize."

"Oh! you will drive me mad! What, with such health as yours?"

"Did n't you tell me that the notary had made a very ingenious draft of a will, in that it assured my sons the whole of the property at their majority?"

"Yes, monsieur, if you will give up for six years a fourth of the revenue from the real estate only."

"Let me see the draft."

"Here it is."

"My eyes are a little weak. Won't you read it to me yourself?"

Bonbonne began to read it article by article; the marquis from time to time expressed the liveliest satisfaction.

"The scheme is an excellent one," he said, at last, "especially as it gives Madame de Chauvelin three hundred thousand francs a year, twice what she now has."

"You approve it then?"

"In every respect."

"So that I can transcribe it?"

"Transcribe it."

"And then you must give it validity by putting your hand to it."

"Do it quickly, Bonbonne, do it quickly!"

"Why, you are absolutely unreasonable. It took me half an hour to read the document to you. I must have at least an hour to copy it."

"Oh! if you knew what haste I am in! Come, dictate to me, I will write it all with my own hand."

"By no means, monsieur, by no means, your eyes are red already; if you should write for quarter of an hour you would have a fever on the heels of the headache you are going to have."

"What shall I do during the hour that you think you require?"

"Go for a walk, take the air on the lawn with madame la marquise. I will cut my pens, and woe to the paper! I will blacken more of it, all by myself, I promise you, than three attorney's clerks."

The marquis followed the suggestion with a sort of repugnance; he felt dull and heavy, yet strangely agitated.

"Be calm, pray," said Bonbonne. "Are you afraid you won't have time to sign? An hour, I tell you. What the deuce! Monsieur le Marquis, surely you will live sixty-one minutes."

"You are right," he replied, and he went downstairs.

The marchioness was awaiting him. Seeing that he was calmer and his face brighter, she said,—

"Well, monsieur, have you been hard at work?"

"Oh! yes, marchioness, and at useful work, with which you and your sons will be content, I trust."

"So much the better! give me your arm. Shall we walk? The hothouses are open; would you like to pay them a visit?"

"Whatever you please, marchioness."

"You will sleep well after the walk. If you knew how delighted the servants were to put sheets on your great bed."

"I shall sleep as I have not slept for ten years, marchioness; I tremble with pleasure simply to think of it."

"You think that you will not be too much bored here with us?"

"No, marchioness, no."

"And that you will get used to our country ways?"

"Yes, without any difficulty. And if the king, whom I regret having treated somewhat rudely, perhaps,— if the king forgets me, he will do well."

"The king? Ah! monsieur," said the marchioness affectionately, "you sighed when you spoke of His Majesty."

"I love the king, marchioness, but believe me —"

He did not finish the sentence. The cracking of a whip and the sound of a horse's bells interrupted him.

"What is that?" he said.

"A courier just passing through the gate," the marchioness replied. "Is he in your service?"

"No; it is strange. A courier whom everybody salutes, who is allowed to enter the flower-garden, can come only from —"

"From the king!" murmured the marchioness, turning pale.

"In the king's name!" cried the courier in a loud voice.

"The king!"

Monsieur de Chauvelin hurried toward the courier, who had already handed his letter to the maître d'hôtel.

"A letter from the king, alas!" said the marchioness to Père Delar, whom the noise of the arrival had attracted with the rest.

The marquis offered the courier wine in a silver goblet, an honor explained by the respect accorded by every gentleman to royalty, even when represented by a servant

He opened the letter; it contained these lines written in the monarch's own hand:—

"It is hardly twenty-four hours since you went away, my friend, and it seems as if I had not seen you for months. Old men who love each other ought not to part. Will they have time to join each other again? I am sad unto death. I need you; come, do not deprive me of a friend on the pretext of wishing to defend my crown. It is the surest way to attack it, on the contrary, and, so long as you sustain it by your presence, I shall feel that it is firmer than ever. Let me see you to-morrow at my *lever;* that will be a sign of a happy day.

"Your most affectionate

"Louis."

"The king summons me," said Chauvelin, deeply moved. "I must go instantly; he cannot do without me. Let my horses be harnessed!"

"Oh!" rejoined the marchioness, "so soon, after so many sweet promises!"

"You shall hear from me soon, madame."

"Monsieur le Marquis, the copy is made!" cried Bonbonne in the distance.

"Very well! very well!"

"You have only to read it over and sign it."

"I have n't the time. Later."

"Later! Why remember what you said just now."

"I know it, I know it."

"'No more delay.'"

"The king cannot wait."

"But you forget your children, you forget the fate of your family."

"I forget nothing, Bonbonne; but I must go, and I am going. My children and the future of my family are all cared for, Bonbonne, remember that."

"A signature, only a signature."

"You see, my old friend," said the marquis, radiant with joy, "I am so determined to arrange that matter, that if I should die before I have signed my will, I swear to you that I will return from the other world, and that is far away, for the express purpose of signing it. Let that set your mind at rest; adieu."

Hastily embracing his children and his wife, forgetting everything except king and court, he jumped into his carriage as if he had grown twenty years younger, and started for Paris.

The marchioness and the whole household, but now so joyous and happy, remained by the gate, deserted, depressed, dumb with despair.

IX.

VENUS AND PSYCHE.

On the morning following the despatch of his letter to Grosbois, the first words spoken by Louis XV. were an inquiry for the Marquis de Chauvelin, and his first glance was in search of him.

The marquis had arrived during the night and was present at the *petit lever.*

"Good," said the king, "there you are, marquis. *Mon Dieu!* what a long time you have been away!"

"It is my first absence, sire, and shall be my last; if I leave you now it will be forever. But the king is very kind to think that I have been long absent. I have been away only twenty-four hours."

"Do you mean it, dear friend? In that case it must be that devilish prediction ringing in my ears; so that, failing to see you at your usual post, I imagined that you were dead, and, with you dead, — you understand?"

"Perfectly, sire."

"Let us say no more about that. You are here and that 's the main thing. To be sure the countess has a little grudge against us: against you for saying what you said, against me for recalling you after such an insult; but don't you worry over her ill-humor, for time arranges all those things and the king will assist time."

"Thanks, sire."

"Tell me what you did during your exile."

"Fancy, sire, that I came near being converted!"

"I understand: you are beginning to repent of having sung of the seven mortal sins."

"Oh! if I had never done aught but sing of them!"

"My cousin Conti was talking about the song only yesterday, and he was delighted with it."

"I was young then, sire, and impromptus seemed easy to me. I was alone at Ile-Adam with seven charming women. Monsieur le Prince de Conti hunted, while I remained at the château and — wrote poetry. Ah! those were the good old days, sire."

"Do you take me for your confessor, marquis, and is this your confession?"

"My confessor? Ah! yes, Your Majesty is right, I had made an appointment for this morning with a Camaldule at Grosbois."

"Oh, the poor man! what an opportunity to learn something he has missed! Would you have told him everything, Chauvelin?"

"Absolutely everything, sire."

"It would have been a long session in that case."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* sire, in addition to my own sins, I have so many sins of other people on my conscience, especially so many of —"

"Of mine, eh? I excuse you from confessing those, Chauvelin; a man confesses for himself only."

"Nevertheless, sire, sin is alarmingly epidemic at court. I no sooner arrive than I hear of a very strange adventure."

"An adventure, Chauvelin; to whose account is it charged?"

"To whose account are interesting adventures usually charged, sire?"

"*Parbleu!* to mine, I suppose."

"Or to the —"

"Or to the Comtesse du Barry's, eh?"

"You have guessed, sire."

"What do you say? the Comtesse du Barry has sinned? *Peste!* tell me about it, Chauvelin."

"I don't say that the adventure was exactly a sin in itself, I say that it came to my mind apropos of sinning."

"Well, what is the adventure, marquis? tell me at once."

"At once, sire?"

"Yes. Kings, as you know, do not like to wait."

"*Peste!* it is a serious matter, sire."

"Bah! has she had some new dispute with my granddaughter-in-law?"

"Sire, I do not say no."

"Ah! the countess will end by falling out with the dauphiness, and then, on my word! —"

"I think, sire, that madame la comtesse has already had a falling out."

"With the dauphiness?"

"No, but with another of your granddaughters-in-law."

"The Comtesse de Provence?"

"Herself."

"The devil! I am in a pretty pickle, then! Tell me, Chauvelin —"

"Sire?"

"Is the Comtesse de Provence the complainant?"

"They say so."

"Then the Comte de Provence is sure to write some outrageous verses on the poor countess. She has only to keep still, she will be lashed in fine style."

"That will be simply a Roland for an Oliver, sire."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Imagine that Madame la Marquise de Rosen —"

"The fascinating little brunette, the Comtesse de Provence's friend?"

"Yes, whom Your Majesty has had your eyes on much of the time during the past month."

"Oh! I have been scolded sufficiently for that in a certain place, marquis! Well?"

"Who has scolded you, sire?"

"*Pardieu!* the countess."

"Very good. The countess has scolded you, sire, — so far so good; but in the other direction she has done something more than scold."

"Explain yourself, marquis; you frighten me."

"*Dame!* sire, you may well be frightened; I don't say you nay."

"Is it really serious?"

"Very serious."

"Speak."

"It seems that — "

"That?"

"You see, sire, it is harder to tell about than it was to do."

"You really do alarm me, marquis. Thus far I have thought that you were joking. But if something really serious has happened let us talk seriously."

At that moment the Duc de Richelieu entered the room.

"Something new, sire!" he said, with a smile that was at once winning and anxious: winning because he wished to propitiate the king, anxious because he was about to contest the favor of this favorite who had been recalled to Versailles after a single day of banishment.

"Something new! where does it come from, my dear duke?" said the king.

He looked around and saw the Marquis de Chauvelin laughing in his sleeve.

"You laugh, heartless man," he said.

"Sire, the storm is about to burst; I foresee that from the melancholy air of Monsieur de Richelieu."

"You are mistaken, marquis. I announced news, it is true, but I do not undertake to tell what it is."

"However am I to know what you are talking about then?"

"A page from Madame de Provence is in your antechamber with a letter from his mistress; what are Your Majesty's orders?"

"Oho!" said the king, who was not sorry to throw the whole burden upon Monsieur or Madame de Provence, whom he did not like, "since when have the sons of France or their wives been accustomed to write to the king instead of presenting themselves at his *lever?*"

"Sire, the letter will probably explain to Your Majesty that failure to observe the rules of etiquette."

"Take the letter, duke, and hand it to me."

The duke bowed, left the room, and returned a moment later with the letter in his hand.

"Sire," he said, handing the letter to the king, "do not forget that I am Madame du Barry's friend, and that I constitute myself her advocate in advance."

The king glanced at Richelieu, opened the letter, and frowned visibly as he ran his eye over its contents.

"Oh! this is too much," he muttered; "and you have undertaken to defend a bad cause, duke. In very truth, Madame du Barry is mad."

He turned to the officers of his household.

"Let some one go at once to Madame de Rosen's and inquire for her health in my name, and say to her that I will receive her immediately after I am dressed, before going to mass. Poor marchioness! dear little woman!"

The bystanders exchanged glances. Was a new star rising above the horizon of royal favor?

In truth, nothing was more likely. The marchioness was young and pretty. She had been appointed lady-in-waiting to Madame de Provence a year before, and had become intimate with the favorite, attending all her private functions, where the king had seen her frequently. But, upon certain observations on the part of the princess, who was offended by that intimacy, she suddenly broke off all relations with Madame du Barry, who had made no secret of her annoyance.

That is all that the court knew.

The letter, of which nobody knew the contents, made a serious impression on the king. He seemed thoughtful during the remainder of the reception, spoke a word or two only to some of his particular favorites, hurried the ceremonial, and dismissed those in attendance earlier than usual, after bidding Monsieur de Chauvelin not to go away.

The ceremony of the *lever* at an end, everybody departed, and as His Majesty was informed that Madame de Rosen was waiting, he gave orders to introduce her.

Madame de Rosen's *entrée* was as pathetic as possible; she was weeping bitterly as she knelt at the king's feet.

The king raised her.

"Forgive me, sire," she said, "for having made use of an august influence to obtain access to Your Majesty; but really I was so desperate —"

"Oh! I forgive you with all my heart, madame, and I am obliged to my grandson for opening a door for you, which will always be open to you henceforth. But let us come down to the fact, — to the main point."

The marchioness cast down her eyes.

"I am in haste," continued the king; "my presence

is awaited at mass. Is what you write to me really true? Can it be that the countess really permitted herself to — "

"O sire, you make me blush with shame. I come to demand justice at the king's hands. Never was a woman of quality so treated."

"What!" said the king, smiling in spite of himself, "treated like a disobedient child, and spared no detail?"

"Yes, sire, by four of her women in her presence, in her boudoir," replied the young woman, lowering her eyes.

"Peste!" rejoined the king, in whose mind that last detail gave birth to a multitude of ideas, "the countess did not boast of that project beforehand. And how was it done? tell me, marchioness," he added, with the leer of a satyr.

"Sire," replied the young woman, blushing more and more, "she asked me to breakfast. I excused myself on the ground that I had little liberty, that my duties required me to be in attendance on Her Royal Highness at eight o'clock in the morning. She sent word to me to come at seven, that she would not detain me long; and, in fact, sire, I stayed with her only half an hour."

"You can set your mind at rest, madame, I will have an explanation with the countess, and justice shall be done you. But I urge you, in your own interest, not to make too much noise over the incident; above all things, let your husband know nothing of it. Husbands are devilish prudes in such matters."

"Oh! I beg the king to believe that, so far as I am concerned, I shall know enough to say nothing. But my enemy, the countess, — I am very sure that she has already boasted to her intimate friends of what she has done, and to-morrow the whole court will know. O my God! my God! how wretched I am!"

And the marchioness hid her face in her hands at the risk of making her rouge spread with her tears.

"Have no fear, marchioness," said the king. "The court could have no prettier plaything than you. And if people do talk about it, it will be from envy, just as in Olympus long ago they talked about a similar adventure that happened to Psyche. I know some of our prudes who would not be so easily consoled as you can afford to be; for you had nothing to lose by it, marchioness."

The marchioness made a reverence and blushed still more, if such a thing were possible.

The king watched the blush and devoured the tears.

"Come," said he, "return to your apartments and wipe those pretty eyes. This evening, at the card-table, we will arrange it all; you have my promise to that effect."

And with the gallantry and winning manner peculiar to his race, the king escorted the young woman to the door, where she had to pass through the throng of courtiers, all of whom were surprised and puzzled to the last degree.

The Duc d'Ayen, who was captain of the body-guard in attendance, approached the king and bowed low without speaking, awaiting his orders.

"To mass, Duc d'Ayen, to mass, now that I have performed the functions of confessor," said the king.

"Such a pretty penitent can have committed none but pretty little sins, sire."

"Alas! the poor child! they are not her own sins that she is expiating," pursued the king, walking along the broad gallery toward the chapel.

The Duc d'Ayen followed a step behind him, near enough to hear and answer him, but not on the same line, as etiquette demanded.

"A man would be lucky to be her accomplice even in a crime, sire."

"Her sin is the countess'."

"Oho! the king knows all of those."

"The dear countess is certainly slandered. She is extravagant, mad if you will,—as on the occasion in question, for which I shall give her a scolding,—but she has an excellent heart. It would be useless for any one to tell me any ill of her, for I would not believe it. *Parbleu!* I know perfectly well that I am not her first lover, and that I succeeded Radix de Sainte-Foy in her good graces."

"Yes, sire," replied the duke, with his usual malice enveloped in the most exquisite courtesy, "as Your Majesty succeeded Pharamond."

The king, notwithstanding his shrewd wit, was not strong enough to contend with that rough jouster unless he lost his temper. He realized the absurdity of the latter course, and pretended not to understand. He made haste to address a word or two to a knight of Saint-Louis whom he passed. Louis XV. was good-humored and easy-going; he overlooked many liberties on the part of his intimate friends, and, provided that he was entertained, he cared little for the rest. The Duc d'Ayen especially possessed the privilege of saying whatever his fancy prompted him to say. Madame du Barry the omnipotent had never dreamed of opposing him; his name, his rank, and his wit seemed to her from the outset to make him unassailable.

During the mass the king's mind wandered. He thought of the tempest Madame du Barry's latest freak would arouse if it should come to the ears of monsieur le dauphin. That prince had administered a just rebuke only the day before to the countess, who had insisted

that Vicomte du Barry should have an appointment as equerry in his (the dauphin's) household, against his will.

"Do not let him come near me," the dauphin had said, "or I will have him driven away by my people."

Certainly such a frame of mind gave little promise of indulgence for such a vulgar practical joke as that in which the countess had indulged. Louis XV. left the chapel, therefore, sorely perplexed. Before going to the council, he betook himself to the apartments of madame la dauphine. He found her gorgeously attired, with a bird's beak in diamonds, beautifully mounted, in her hair.

"You have a marvellous jewel there, madame," said the king.

"Do you think so, sire? How does it happen that Your Majesty does not recognize it?"

"I?"

"To be sure, since Your Majesty ordered it to be brought to me."

"I have no idea what you mean."

"I can very easily explain my meaning. Yesterday, a jeweller appeared at the château of Versailles with this jewel, adorned with fleurs-de-lis and the crown of France, which Your Majesty had ordered. Since God has taken away the queen, I alone, he thought, was entitled to wear it. He brought it to me, therefore, in accordance with your commands and your intention, I doubt not."

The king blushed and did not reply.

"Here is another evil omen," he thought. "The countess was well advised to provide fresh embarrassment for me with her absurd treatment of the marchioness. — Shall you come to the card-party this evening, madame?" he said aloud.

"If Your Majesty bids me do so."

"Bid you, my child! I beg you to come; you will give me great pleasure."

Madame la dauphine bowed coldly. The king saw that he could not succeed in making her unbend. He spoke of having to attend the council and took his leave.

"My children do not love me," he said to the Duc d'Ayen, who had not left him.

"The king is in error. I can assure Your Majesty that your august children love you at least as dearly as you love them."

Louis understood the epigram, but did not show that he understood it. That was the policy he had adopted. Otherwise, he would have had to banish the Duc d'Ayen ten times a day, and the king, after the ennui caused by Monsieur de Chauvelin's absence, understood better than ever how indispensable the presence of his favorite courtiers was to him.

"Bah!" he said to himself, "they can prick me all they like, they won't flay me. The thing will last as long as I do, and my successor may get out of it as best he can."

Strange recklessness, for which the ill-fated Louis XVI. was to pay a heavy penalty!

X.

THE KING'S CARD-PARTY.

When he entered the countess' apartments, intending to scold her, the king was welcomed by an ill-humored countenance behind which he felt that a storm of anger was grumbling, all ready to break out.

Louis XV. was weak. He dreaded scenes, whether they came from his daughters, his grandsons, his daughters-in-law, or his mistress, and yet, like all men placed between their mistresses and their families, he constantly exposed himself to them.

On that day he proposed to anticipate the struggle that was preparing by providing himself with an auxiliary.

And so, after he had cast upon the countess the single glance by which he consulted the barometer of her good-humor he looked all about the room.

"Where is Chauvelin?" he asked.

"Monsieur de Chauvelin, sire?" said the countess.

"Yes, Monsieur de Chauvelin."

"Why, it seems to me, and you know it better than any one, that I am not the one to whom you should apply for news of Monsieur de Chauvelin, sire."

"Why so?"

"Why, because he is not one of my friends; and, he not being one of my friends, it follows naturally that you should look for him elsewhere than in my apartments."

"I told him to come and wait for me here."

"Oh, well! he must have taken the liberty to disobey the king's commands, and on my word! it was quite as well for him to disobey you as to come here to insult me, as he did the last time."

"Never mind, never mind; I want you to be reconciled," said the king.

"To Monsieur de Chauvelin?" asked the countess.

"To everybody, *morbleu!*"

Then, turning to the countess' sister, who was pretending to amuse herself setting porcelain figures in a line on a console, —

"Chon," he said.

"Sire."

"Come here, my child."

Chon drew near the king.

"Do me the favor, little sister, to send some one to fetch Monsieur de Chauvelin at once."

Chon bowed and left the room to carry out the king's wishes.

Madame du Barry tossed her head and turned her back on His Majesty.

"Well! what is there in that to vex you, countess?" queried the king.

"Oh! I understand," she replied, "that Monsieur de Chauvelin enjoys all your favor, and that you could not get along without him. He is so desirous to please you and so respectful to those you love!"

Louis felt that the storm was approaching. He tried to cut off the water-burst with a cannon shot.

"Chauvelin," he said, "is not the only one who fails in the respect due to me and to those who belong to me."

"Oh! I know," cried Madame du Barry. "Your

Parisians, your Parliament, your very courtiers, to say nothing of persons whom I do not choose to name, fail in respect to the king at their good pleasure, and vie with each other in showing their lack of respect."

The king glanced at the impertinent young woman with a feeling not wholly exempt from pity.

"Do you know, countess," he said, "that I am not immortal, and that you are playing a game that will lead to your being put in the Bastille or driven from the kingdom as soon as I have closed my eyes?"

"Bah!" exclaimed the countess.

"Oh, don't laugh, countess, it is as I tell you."

"Really, sire, how so?"

"I will state the case in two words."

"I await your statement, sire."

"What is this story of the Marquise de Rosen, and what sort of a liberty, in the most execrable taste, did you take with the poor woman? Do you forget that she has the honor to belong to the household of Madame la Comtesse de Provence?"

"Forget it, sire! No, indeed."

"Very well! then answer me. What is this naughty girl's punishment that you allowed yourself to inflict on the Marquise de Rosen?"

"I, sire?"

"Yes, you," said the king testily.

"Well, upon my word!" cried the countess. "I did not expect to be blamed for carrying out Your Majesty's orders."

"My orders!"

"Certainly. Does the king deign to remember what reply he made when I complained to him of the marchioness' discourtesy?"

"Faith! no, I have no idea."

"Very well! the king said to me: 'What can you expect, countess? The marchioness is a child who ought to be whipped.'"

"*Morbleu!* that was no reason for doing it," cried the king, blushing in spite of himself, for he remembered that he had said, word for word, what the countess had just repeated.

"Very good!" said the countess. "Your Majesty's slightest desire being equivalent to an order in the eyes of his most devoted servant, she made haste to execute that one like the others."

The king could not refrain from laughing at the countess' imperturbable gravity.

"So I am the culprit?" he asked.

"To be sure, sire."

"Then it is for me to expiate the offence."

"Apparently."

"So be it. In that case, countess, you will invite the marchioness to supper in my name, and you will place under her napkin the colonel's commission which her husband has been soliciting for six months, and which I certainly should not have given him so soon except for this incident. In that way reparation will be made for the insult."

"That is all very well! That takes care of the marchioness' insult, but how about mine?"

"What, yours?"

"Yes, who will make reparation for that?"

"How have you been insulted, I pray to know?"

"Oh, this is charming! pray feign surprise."

"I am not feigning it, my dear love. I am, in all frankness and seriousness, very much surprised."

"You have just come from madame la dauphine, have you not?"

"Yes."

"Then you know very well the trick she has played me."

"No, upon my honor! tell me."

"Well, yesterday my jeweller brought her a necklace and me a bird's beak of diamonds at the same time."

"What then?"

"What then?"

"Yes."

"What then, eh? Why, after taking her necklace, she asked to see my beak."

"Aha!"

"And as it had fleurs-de-lis for ornaments, she said, —

"'You are mistaken, my dear Monsieur Bœhmer; that beak of diamonds is not for the countess, but for me, and the proof of what I say is that it has the three fleurs-de-lis of France, which, since the queen's death, I alone have the right to wear.'"

"So that —"

"So that the jeweller, being frightened, dared not disobey the order of madame la dauphine to leave the diamond beak with her, and hurried hither to inform me that my diadem had caught on the way."

"Well! what do you expect me to do, countess?"

"Do! why, I want you to make her give me back my beak."

"Make her give you back your beak?"

"Certainly."

"The dauphiness? You are mad, my dear."

"What! I am mad?"

"Yes. I will give you another first."

"Oh! pshaw! I know what that means."

"On my honor as a gentleman! I promise you."

"Yes! and I shall have it in a year, or in six months at the earliest. How amusing it is!"

"Madame, let this delay be your warning."

"Warning of what?"

"To be less ambitious in the future."

"I, ambitious?"

"To be sure. You know what Monsieur de Chauvelin said the other day."

"Bah! your Chauvelin talks nothing but nonsense."

"But, after all, who authorized you to wear the arms of France?"

"What 's that? who authorized me? why, you."

"I?"

"Yes, you! The monkey you gave me the other day wore them on his collar; why should n't I wear them on my head? Oh! but I know where it all comes from; somebody told me."

"What did somebody tell you? Let us hear."

"*Parbleu!* your plans."

"Well, countess, tell me what my plans are. On my word of honor, it would please me greatly to know them."

"Will you deny that there is a scheme to marry you to the Princesse de Lamballe, and that Monsieur de Chauvelin and all the dauphin's and dauphiness' clique are trying to drive you to it?"

"Madame," replied the king sternly, "I will not deny that there is some truth in what you say, and I will add that I might do much worse. You know it better than I, countess, for you have sounded me about another marriage."

That remark closed the countess' mouth. She sat

down, in ill-humor, at the other end of the room, and broke two porcelain figures.

"Ah! Chauvelin was right," murmured the king. "The crown is not well placed in the hands of Cupids."

There was a moment of sulky silence, during which Mademoiselle du Barry returned to the room.

"Sire," said she, "Monsieur de Chauvelin cannot be found anywhere. I was told that he was in his own apartments, but I have rung and called at his door to no purpose. He refuses to reply."

"*O mon Dieu!*" cried the king. "Has any accident happened to him? Is he ill? Go quickly, quickly, and order the door broken in!"

"Oh! no, sire, he is not ill," replied the countess sharply; "for, on leaving the Prince de Soubise and my brother Jean in the Œil-de-Bœuf, he announced that he should be at work all day on urgent business, but that he would not fail to be at Your Majesty's card-party this evening."

The king took advantage of what seemed to be a proffered armistice on the countess' part.

"He is writing his confession, perhaps," he said, "for the edification of his Camaldule. By the way, countess," he added, "do you know that Bordeu's medicine is doing marvels? Do you know that I do not propose to use any other? A fig for Bonnard and Lamartinière and all their dieting! The other will make me young again, on my word!"

"Nonsense! sire," said Chon. "Why need Your Majesty talk constantly of old age? *Mon Dieu!* is n't Your Majesty of the same age as everybody else?"

"Well, well!" cried the king. "You are like that great rascal of a D'Aumont, to whom I was complaining

the other day that I had no teeth: 'Why, sire,' he replied, showing me a jaw like a porter's, 'who does have teeth?'"

"I have," said the countess; "and I warn you that I will bite you till the blood comes, if you continue to sacrifice me to everybody in this way."

And she returned and seated herself beside the king, displaying a row of pearls in which it was impossible to see a threat.

And so the king, defying their bite, put his lips to the countess' lovely red lips, just as she made a signal to Chon. Chon picked up the pieces of the two porcelain figures.

"There!" she said. "All that falls to the ground is for him who picks it up. Really I think that Bordeu must be a great man," she added under her breath, as she cast a last glance at the king and countess.

And she went out, leaving her sister well advanced on the path of reconciliation.

The king's card-party began at six o'clock in the evening. Monsieur de Chauvelin kept his promise, and was among the first to arrive. The countess appeared in full court dress, because of the presence of the dauphiness, who she knew was to be there.

The marquis and the countess met and greeted each other in the most friendly way.

"*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur de Chauvelin," said the countess, with one of those two-edged smiles which courtiers sharpen so skilfully. "How red you are! One would say you were on the verge of an attack of apoplexy. See Bordeu, marquis. There 's no hope for you except in Bordeu."

She turned to the king with a smile that would have led a pope to perdition.

"Ask the king," she said.

Monsieur de Chauvelin bowed.

"I certainly shall not fail to do so, madame."

"And in so doing you will fulfil the duty of a faithful subject. You must look to your health, my dear marquis, as you are to precede by only two months — "

"I wish that I were to be the one to go before you," said the king, "for then you would be sure to live a hundred years, Chauvelin. But I can only repeat the countess' advice: consult Bordeu, my friend, consult Bordeu."

"Sire, whatever the hour assigned for my death, — and God alone knows when any man is to die, — I promise the king that I will die at his feet."

"Fie, fie! Chauvelin, there are promises that are easily made but cannot be kept. Ask these ladies if it is not so; but if you are as melancholy as all that, my dear friend, we shall die of grief simply from looking at you. Come, Chauvelin, shall we play this evening?"

"As Your Majesty pleases."

"Would you like to whip me at a game of hombre?"

"At the king's service."

They went to the tables.

Monsieur de Chauvelin and the king took their places opposite each other at a special table.

"Now, Chauvelin, keep your eyes open," said the king. "Be ready for the parry. You may be ill, but I was never so well myself. I propose to be wildly gay. Look well to your money above all things. I have to pay Rotiers for a mirror and Bœhmer for a diamond beak."

Madame du Barry bit her lips.

But the marquis, instead of replying, rose painfully from his chair.

"It is very hot, sire," he muttered.

"True," replied the king, who, instead of losing his temper as Louis XIV. would have done at this infraction of the laws of etiquette, treated the difficulty from a selfish point of view. "It is very warm, Chauvelin, but I thank God for it, for the evenings are cool in the month of April."

The marquis tried to smile and picked up his cards with an effort.

"Come, Chauvelin," continued the king. "You are *hombre.*"

"Yes, sire," faltered the marquis; and he bowed.

"Have you a good hand? Let us see. Ah! *ventre Saint-gris*, as my ancestor Henri IV. used to say, how disagreeable you are to-night!"

He glanced at his cards.

"Ah! my dear friend," he said, "I fancy that you are whipped this time."

The marquis made a violent effort to speak, and became so red that the king stopped in dismay.

"Why, what 's the matter, Chauvelin?" he asked. "Answer me."

Monsieur de Chauvelin held out his hands, dropped his cards, drew a long breath, and fell face downward on the floor.

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the king.

"Apoplexy!" murmured certain officious courtiers.

They lifted the marquis, but he did not move a muscle.

"Take *that* away! take it away!" said the king in terror. "Take it away!"

He left the table, trembling nervously, and seized the

arm of the Comtesse du Barry, who led him away to her apartments, nor did he once turn his head to look at that friend from whom, only the night before, he could not bear to be separated.

The king having left the room, no one gave a thought to the lifeless marquis.

His body lay for some time hanging over the back of an arm-chair, for they had raised him to see if he were dead, and then had let him fall back.

The body produced a singular effect, alone in that deserted salon, amid the candelabra gleaming with light and flowers, filling the air with perfume.

A moment later a man appeared in the doorway of the salon, looked all around the room, saw the marquis lying on the chair, approached him, placed his hand on his heart, and said in a cold, clear voice, just as the great clock struck seven, —

"He has gone. A fine death, *cordieu!* a fine death!"

That man was the physician Lamartinière.

XI.

THE VISION.

On the morning of that same day Père Delar had arrived early at Grosbois, with the intention of saying mass at the chapel, and of leaving the praiseworthy disposition the marquis had shown the night before no time to cool. But Madame de Chauvelin met him and told him, with tears in her eyes, all her apprehensions concerning the salvation, already so endangered, of the neophyte who had escaped from their hands at the first friendly word sent to him by the king.

She kept her confessor to dinner, in order to talk with him more at length, and to derive from his wise advice the courage she so much needed after this last disappointment.

Madame de Chauvelin and Père Delar, after leaving the table, walked together in the park for a considerable time, and had seats carried to the shore of a lovely pond, in order to breathe the cool spring breeze after a warm day.

"Reverend father," said the marchioness, "notwithstanding all the comforting words you have said to me, Monsieur de Chauvelin's departure causes me much anxiety. I know how attached he is to life at court. I know that the king is all-powerful, not only over his mind, but over his heart, and His Majesty's conduct is so far from orderliness! I do not think it is a sin to speak so, father. Alas! the scandal is only too public!"

"I assure you, madame, that monsieur le marquis received a salutary impression. It was the first touch. Time and Providence will do the rest. I was speaking of him this morning to our reverend prior. He has ordered prayers in the convent. Do you pray, too, my daughter, you, who are most deeply interested in the great work. Let your children pray. Let us all pray. I offered the blessed sacrifice of the mass in the chapel of the château to that end, and I will do the same every day."

"In the twenty years that I have been Monsieur de Chauvelin's wife," rejoined the marchioness, "I have not let an hour pass without asking God to touch his heart. Thus far the Lord has not granted my prayers. I have lived alone, generally in sorrow and tears, as you know, father. I have lamented in solitude errors which I could not combat. God did not, it seems, deem me sufficiently pure to give me the victory. I must needs suffer still more to purchase that blessing. I will suffer! May the will of the Almighty be done!"

Meanwhile the children and their tutor were at some little distance from the marchioness and Père Delar, the tutor being little older than his charges, — he was only eighteen, — and sharing their amusements.

"Brother," said the elder, "do you know what the fashionable game is now at court?"

"Yes, of course I do. Father told me last night at supper; it is hombre."

"Well, let 's play hombre."

"We can't. In the first place, we have to have cards, and in the second place, we don't know how to play."

"One player is *hombre.*"

"And the other?"

"*Dame!* the other is afraid, I suppose, and then he loses."[1]

"Let 's not talk about cards, brother. You know our mother does n't like it, and she says cards bring bad luck."

At that moment Madame de Chauvelin rose.

"Mother is going into the park," said the younger boy, looking after her, "so she won't see us. Besides, monsieur l'abbé is right with us, and he would tell us if it were wrong."

"It is always wrong," said the tutor, "to give pain to one's mother."

"Oh! but my father plays at court," rejoined the child, with the persistent logic which clings like all weaknesses to every support that affords a little consolation. "We can play as long as my father plays."

The abbé had no reply at hand, and the child continued,—

"Look, there is mother just bidding Père Delar good-night. She 's going toward the gate with him. He must be going home. Let 's wait. When Père Delar has gone mamma will go to her oratory. We can go back to the château behind her, and we 'll ask for some cards and play."

The children followed their mother with their eyes among the deepening shadows, where she gradually passed out of sight.

It was one of those charming evenings that precede the hot days of May. The trees, still leafless, gave promise of foliage near at hand in their swelling buds. Some, like the chestnuts and lindens, more

[1] There is no difference in pronunciation between *hombre* and *ombre*, which means *ghost*.

hurried than the rest, were beginning to burst their envelopes and put forth the springtime treasures they enclosed.

The air was calm and was beginning to be peopled with the ephemeral creatures that appear with the spring and disappear with the autumn. They could be seen disporting themselves by thousands in the last rays of the setting sun, which made of the river a broad purple and gold ribbon, while in the east, that is to say, toward that portion of the park where Madame de Chauvelin had passed out of sight, all objects were beginning to lose their distinctive outlines in that lovely bluish tint which belongs only to certain privileged periods of the year.

There was profound tranquillity blended with infinite splendor throughout all nature.

The silence was broken by the château clock striking seven, and the strokes vibrated a long while in the evening breeze.

Suddenly the marchioness, who was bidding the Camaldule good-night, uttered a loud cry.

"What is it?" inquired the reverend father, retracing his steps. "What is the matter, Madame la Marquise?"

"Nothing, nothing. O my God!"

And the marchioness visibly lost color.

"But you cried out. You certainly felt some shock, some sharp pain. Why, at this moment you are growing paler and paler. What is the matter? In heaven's name, what is the matter?"

"It is impossible. My eyes deceive me."

"What do you see? Tell me, tell me, madame."

"No, it is nothing."

The Camaldule persisted.

"Nothing, nothing, I tell you," Madame de Chauvelin repeated, "nothing."

But her voice died away on her lips, and her eyes were fixed on vacancy, while her hand, white as a hand of ivory, rose slowly to point out an object which the monk could not see.

"In God's name," insisted Père Delar, "tell me what you see."

"Oh! I do not see anything. No, no; it is madness!" cried Madame de Chauvelin; "and yet — oh! look, pray look!"

"Where?"

"There, there, do you see?"

"I see nothing."

"You see nothing — there, there?"

"Absolutely nothing; but tell me, madame, what do you see?"

"Oh! I see — but no, it is impossible."

"Tell me."

"I see Monsieur de Chauvelin in court dress, but very pale and walking very slowly. He passed along there, over there."

"My God!"

"Without seeing me, do you understand? Or, even if he saw me, without speaking to me, which is stranger still."

"And do you see him now?"

"Yes."

And the marchioness' finger and her eyes indicated the direction followed by the marquis, who was still invisible to Père Delar.

"Where is he going, madame?"

"Toward the château. He is just passing the great oak yonder. He brushes against the bench. Look,

look, he is going toward the children. He turns away behind the clump of trees. He has disappeared. Oh! if the children are still where they were, it was impossible for them not to see him."

At that instant a loud cry made Madame de Chauvelin start. The cry was uttered by the children. It echoed so sadly and dismally through the gathering shadows that the marchioness nearly fell.

Père Delar supported her in his arms.

"Do you hear?" she murmured. "Do you hear?"

"Yes," Père Delar replied. "I did hear a cry."

Almost instantly the marchioness saw, or rather felt, her two boys running toward her. Their rapid, breathless steps rang out on the gravelled paths.

"Mother! mother! did you see him?" cried the elder.

"Mother! mother! did you see?" echoed the younger.

"O madame, do not listen to them," said the abbé, running behind and gasping with the effort to overtake them, their pace was so swift.

"Well, my children, what is it?" queried Madame de Chauvelin.

But the children did not reply. They simply pressed close to her side.

"Tell me what has happened," she said, caressing them. "Speak."

The boys looked at each other.

"You tell her," said the elder.

"No, you."

"Well, mamma," said the elder, "didn't you see him just the same as we did?"

"Do you hear?" cried the marchioness, raising her arms toward heaven. "Do you hear, father?"

And she grasped the Camaldule's trembling hand in her own icy cold ones.

"See whom?" asked the monk, shuddering from head to foot.

"Why, my father," said the younger boy. "Did n't you see him, mamma? He came from where you were, and he must have gone very near you."

"Oh! how happy I am," said the elder boy, clapping his hands. "Papa has come back."

Madame de Chauvelin turned to the abbé.

"Madame," he said, understanding her questioning look, "I can assure you that the young gentlemen are mistaken when they say that they saw monsieur le marquis. I was close beside them, and I am sure that no one — "

"And I, monsieur," said the elder of the children, "tell you that I just saw papa as plainly as I see you."

"Fie! Monsieur l'Abbé, for shame! it 's wicked to tell a lie!" said the younger boy.

"It is strange!" said Père Delar.

The marchioness shook her head.

"They saw nothing, madame," the tutor repeated, — "nothing, absolutely nothing."

"Wait," said the marchioness.

She turned to her sons and said to them with the gentle maternal accent that makes God smile, —

"My children, you say that you saw your father?"

"Yes, mamma," they replied with one voice.

"How was he dressed?"

"He had his red court coat, his blue ribbon, a white waistcoat with gold embroidery, velvet breeches like his coat, silk stockings, shoes with buckles, and a sword at his side."

While the elder boy thus mentioned the details of

his father's costume, the younger nodded his head approvingly.

And while the younger boy nodded his head approvingly, Madame de Chauvelin pressed the Camaldule's hand with a more and more feverish grasp. In that same costume she had seen her husband pass.

"And was there nothing specially noticeable about your father?"

"He was very pale," said the older boy.

"Oh! yes, very pale," echoed the younger. "He looked like a dead man."

Everybody started, mother, tutor, confessor, so noticeable was the accent of terror in the child's words.

"Where was he going?" the marchioness asked at last, in a voice which she tried in vain to render firm.

"Toward the château," said the elder.

"As I was running away, I turned my head," added the other, "and I saw him going up the steps."

"Do you hear? Do you hear?" the mother whispered in the monk's ear.

"Yes, madame, I hear; but I confess that I do not understand. Why should Monsieur de Chauvelin have passed through the gate on foot, without stopping to speak to you? Why should he have passed his sons without stopping? Lastly, how can he have entered the château without any of the attendants seeing him and without asking for anybody?"

"You are right," said the abbé. "What you say is unanswerable."

"At all events," continued Père Delar, "the thing can easily be proved."

"We will go and look," cried the children, starting to run toward the château.

"And so will I," said the abbé.

"And I," murmured the marchioness.

"Madame," interposed the monk, "you are intensely agitated, white with terror, and even if it should be Monsieur de Chauvelin, — I admit that it may be he, — what occasion have you to be terrified?"

"Father," said the marchioness, looking the monk in the face, "if he had come thus mysteriously and alone, should you not consider it a very strange proceeding?"

"For that very reason we must all be mistaken, madame. That is why we must believe that some stranger has found his way into the grounds, a malefactor perhaps."

"But a malefactor, however much of a malefactor he may be," said the abbé, "has a body, and you would have seen that body, father, and so should I, whereas the strange part of the whole affair is that madame la marquise and these young gentlemen saw it, and that we did not see it."

"No matter," rejoined the monk. "In any event, it will be better that madame la marquise and her children retire to the orangery while we go to the château. We will call the servants and satisfy ourselves as to what has happened. Go, madame, go."

The marchioness had not strength to resist. She obeyed mechanically, and withdrew to the orangery with her sons, not having removed her eyes for an instant from the windows of the château.

"Let us pray, my sons," she said, falling on her knees, "for there is a soul entreating me to pray at this moment."

Meanwhile the monk and the abbé walked toward the château; but when they came in sight of the main door they halted, and took counsel together as to whether they should not first go to the servants' quarters and

call some of the servants, who were at that time assembled for supper, to assist them in searching the buildings.

That suggestion was put forward by the prudent Camaldule, and the abbé was on the point of acceding to it when a small door was thrown open and Bonbonne, the old steward, appeared, running toward them as rapidly as his great age would permit. He was pale and trembling, gesticulating wildly, and talking to himself.

"What is it?" asked the abbé, going to meet him.

"O my God! my God!" cried Bonbonne.

"What has happened to you in heaven's name?" said the Camaldule.

"I have seen a terrible vision."

The monk and the abbé exchanged glances.

"A vision!" repeated the monk.

"Nonsense! impossible!" said the abbé.

"I tell you it is so," Bonbonne persisted.

"What was the vision? Tell us."

"Yes. What did you see?"

"I don't know yet just what I saw; but I saw —"

"Explain yourself, pray."

"Well! I was in the room where I usually work, below monsieur le marquis' large study, and connected with it, as you know, by a staircase in the wall. I was looking over the documents again to make sure that we had overlooked nothing in drawing up the will, which is so essential to the future welfare of the whole family. The clock had just struck seven. Suddenly I heard footsteps in the room overhead which I locked yesterday behind monsieur le marquis, and of which I had the key in my pocket. I listened. It was certainly footsteps. I listened again. The steps were certainly

over my head. There was some one in that room! Nor was that all. I heard some one open the drawers in Monsieur de Chauvelin's desk. I heard some one move the chair that stood in front of the desk, and that, too, without any precaution, which seemed to me strangest of all. My first thought was that robbers had broken into the château. But the robbers were either very imprudent or very sure of their game. And what was I to do? Call the servants? They were in their quarters at the other end of the château. While I went to call them the robbers would have time to escape. I took my double-barrelled gun. I went up the secret staircase leading from my office to monsieur le marquis' study. I walked on tiptoe. As I neared the top steps I listened more and more intently. Not only did I hear furniture moving, but I also heard groaning, coughing, and various inarticulate sounds that went to the very bottom of my soul, for I must tell you that the nearer I came to the door the more certain it seemed to me that I recognized monsieur le marquis' voice."

"Strange!" cried the abbé.

"Strange, indeed!" the monk assented.

"Go on, Bonbonne, go on."

"At last," continued the steward, drawing nearer to his two listeners, as if to seek a refuge with them, "at last I looked through the keyhole and I saw a bright light in the room, although it was quite dark outside and the shutters were closed, closed by myself."

"Well?"

"The noise continued. There was a groaning like the death-rattle. I had n't a drop of blood in my veins. However, I was determined to go on to the end. I made an effort. I placed my eye at its post of obser-

vation once more, and I saw lighted wax candles arranged about a coffin."

"Oh! you are mad, my dear Monsieur Bonbonne," said the monk, shuddering in spite of himself.

"I saw, I saw, father."

"But your eyes deceived you," said the abbé.

"I tell you, monsieur l'abbé, that I saw the thing as plainly as I see you. I tell you that I lost neither my presence of mind nor my reason."

"And yet you fled in terror!"

"Not at all. Quite the contrary, I remained where I was, praying to God and my patron saint to give me strength. But suddenly there was a great uproar. The candles went out, and all was dark. Not till then did I come downstairs and out of doors, and see you. Now there are three of us. Here is the key to the study. You are men of the church, and consequently exempt from superstitious terror. Will you come with me? We will satisfy ourselves as to the condition of things."

"Let us go," said the Camaldule.

"Let us go," echoed the abbé.

And they entered the château together, not by the small door which had given egress to Bonbonne, but by the great door through which the marquis had entered.

As they passed through the vestibule, in front of a huge family clock surmounted by the Chauvelin arms, the steward raised the candle he had just lighted.

"Upon my word," he said, "this is very strange. Some one must have touched that clock and deranged the works."

"Why so?"

"Because it has been in the château since I was a child and has never varied."

"Well?"

"Why, don't you see that it has stopped?"

"At seven o'clock!" exclaimed the monk.

"At seven o'clock!" echoed the abbé.

And again they exchanged glances.

"Strange!" muttered the abbé.

The monk mumbled some words which resembled a prayer.

Then they ascended the state staircase and passed through the marquis' apartments, which were closed and deserted. The vast rooms, lighted only by the flickering light of a single candle carried by the steward, were solemn and terrifying.

When they reached the door of the study their hearts were beating fast. They stopped and listened.

"Do you hear?" asked the steward.

"Perfectly," said the abbé.

"What?" asked the monk.

"Why, don't you hear that sort of rattle like the noise made by a person in the death agony?"

"True," said the steward's two companions in one voice.

"I was not mistaken then?" said the steward.

"Give me the key," said Père Delar, crossing himself. "We are men, upright men, Christians, and we should fear naught. Let us go in."

He opened the door, and, however great the man of God's trust in God, his hand trembled as he inserted the key in the lock. When the door was open, all three paused on the threshold.

The room was empty.

They walked slowly into the vast study, filled with books and pictures. Everything was in its place, except the marquis' portrait, which had broken the

nail that held it and fallen from the wall, and was lying on the floor, the canvas being torn just at the head.

The abbé called the steward's attention to the portrait and breathed freely again.

"That was what caused your alarm," he said.

"Yes, that accounts for the noise," replied the steward. "But the groans we heard, — did the portrait make them?"

"We certainly did hear groans," said the monk.

"And what is that on the table!" cried Bonbonne, suddenly.

"What? what is there on the table?" asked the abbé.

"That half-extinguished candle," said Bonbonne, "that candle which is still smoking; and feel of this piece of sealing-wax, which is not yet cold."

"True!" said the two witnesses of that almost miraculous incident.

"And this seal," continued the steward, "which monsieur le marquis wore on his watch-chain, and with which this envelope addressed to his notary, is sealed!"

The abbé fell upon a chair more dead than alive. He had not the strength to run away.

The monk remained standing; and, without visible terror, like a man who has severed his connection with the things of this world, he tried to penetrate the mystery of whose cause he knew nothing, whose effect he saw, but whose purpose he did not understand.

Meanwhile the steward, whose devotion to his employers gave him courage, was turning over, one after another, the pages of the will he had copied the day before for his master.

When he reached the last page, the perspiration stood in beads upon his brow.

"The will is signed!" he murmured.

The abbé leaped from his chair, the monk leaned over the desk, and the steward looked from one to the other.

There was a moment of awed silence, and the bravest of the three felt his hair stand erect upon his head.

At last all three turned their eyes upon the will.

A codicil had been added, the ink being still wet.

It was conceived in these terms: —

"It is my wish that my body be interred in the Carmelite church on Place Maubert beside my ancestors.

"Done at the château of Grosbois the 27th of April, 1774, at seven o'clock in the evening.

Signed: CHAUVELIN."

The two signatures and the codicil were written in a hand less firm than that of the body of the will, but were perfectly legible.

"A *De Profundis*, messieurs," said the steward, "for it is perfectly evident that monsieur le marquis is dead."

The three men knelt piously and repeated the funeral prayer in unison. After a few moments of solemn meditation they rose.

"My poor master!" said Bonbonne. "He gave me his word to return and sign his will, and he has kept his word. God have mercy on his soul!"

The steward placed the will in the envelope, and taking up the candle, motioned to his companions to leave the room.

"There is nothing more for us to do here," he said. "Let us go and find the widow and orphans."

"You do not mean to give that package to the marchioness," said the abbé. "Oh! in heaven's name, do nothing of the kind!"

"Have no fear," said the steward. "This package shall not leave my hands except to pass into the notary's. My master has chosen me to be the executor of his will, as he has permitted me to see what I have seen, and to hear what I have heard. I shall not rest until his last wishes are executed. Then I will go and join him. Eyes that have witnessed such things should promptly close."

As he spoke, Bonbonne, having gone out last from the study, had closed and locked the door. The three went down the stairs, glanced timidly at the clock which had stopped at seven o'clock, and, passing through the door, betook themselves to the orangery where the marchioness and her children were waiting.

All three were still praying, the mother on her knees, the boys standing beside her.

"What is it?" she cried, springing hastily to her feet at sight of the three men. "What is it?"

"Continue your prayer, madame," said Père Delar. "You were not mistaken. By a special favor, granted doubtless to your piety, God vouchsafed to allow Monsieur de Chauvelin's soul to come and say farewell to us."

"O father," cried the marchioness, raising her clasped hands to heaven, "you see that my eyes did not deceive me!"

Falling once more upon her knees, she resumed her interrupted prayer, motioning to the children to follow her example.

Two hours later the sound of bells was heard in the courtyard, causing Madame de Chauvelin, who was sitting between the beds of her two sleeping children, to raise her head.

A voice rang through the corridors, shouting, —

"A courier from the king!"

At the same moment a footman entered and handed the marchioness a long document with a black seal.

It was the official notice that the marquis had died of an attack of apoplexy at seven o'clock in the evening, while attending the king's card-party.

XII.

THE DEATH OF LOUIS XV.

After Monsieur de Chauvelin's death the king was rarely seen to smile. One would have said that the marquis' ghost walked at his side wherever he went. Driving alone afforded him any distraction. Excursions were multiplied. The king went from Rambouillet to Compiègne, from Compiègne to Fontainebleau, from Fontainebleau to Versailles, but never to Paris. The king had held Paris in horror since its outbreak in connection with the baths of blood.

But all those beautiful palaces, instead of distracting his thoughts, carried him back to the past, the past to his memories, his memories to reflection. Madame du Barry alone could rouse him from that melancholy, bitter, profound reflection, and it was truly pitiful to see the pains the pretty young creature took to instil some warmth, not into the body but into the heart of the old man.

Meanwhile society was crumbling like the monarchy. To the philosophic infiltrations of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Diderot, succeeded the scandalous cloud-bursts of Beaumarchais. Beaumarchais published his famous "Mémoire" against Councillor Goezmann, and that magistrate, a member of the Maupeou tribunal, no longer dared appear in his seat.

Beaumarchais' "Barbier de Séville" was in process of rehearsal, and people were already talking of the auda-

cious speeches the philosopher Figaro was to deliver on the stage.

An adventure of Monsieur de Fronsac had caused much scandal. Two adventures of Monsieur le Marquis de Sade had horrified the nation.

Society could no longer be said to be walking into the abyss, but into the common sewer.

All those anecdotes were very degrading and nauseous, but they were the only ones that diverted the king. Monsieur de Sartines made him a journal of them, — another ingenious idea of Madame du Barry, — a journal which His Majesty read in the morning in his bed. That journal was edited in all the brothels of Paris, particularly at the famous La Gourdan's.

One day the king learned from his journal that Monsieur de Lorry, Bishop of Tarbes, had had the audacity on the preceding day to drive into Paris with Madame Gourdan and two of her boarders in his open carriage. That was too much. The king caused the fact to be communicated to the grand almoner, who summoned the bishop before him.

Luckily everything was explained as the merest accident, to the great glory of the prelate's modesty and chastity. On returning from Versailles the bishop of Tarbes had seen three women standing beside a broken carriage on the high road. Taking pity upon them in their embarrassment, he offered them seats in his carriage. La Gourdan thought it an amusing proposition and accepted it.

But no one was willing to believe in the prelate's innocence, and every one said to him: "What! you don't know La Gourdan? Really, that is incredible!"

On top of it all the famous musical war broke out

between the Gluckists and the Piccinists. The court was divided into two factions.

The dauphiness, young, poetically inclined, naturally musical, and a pupil of Gluck, looked upon our operas as a collection of *ariettes*, more or less graceful and pleasing. After witnessing Racine's tragedies, it occurred to her to send "Iphigénie en Aulide" to her master, and to request him to pour forth the waves of his music upon Racine's harmonious lines. In six months the score was written and Gluck himself brought it to Paris.

Once in Paris Gluck became the dauphiness' favorite, and was admitted to the *petits appartements* at all hours.

One must accustom one's self to everything, and especially to the grandiose. When Gluck's music appeared, it did not create the expected impression. Empty or tired hearts do not need thought. Noise is enough for them. Thought is a bore, noise a distraction.

The old society preferred Italian music, the tinkling bell to the melodious organ.

Madame du Barry, in a spirit of opposition, and because madame la dauphine had put forward German music, became the champion of the Italian school, and sent libretti to Piccini. Piccini sent back scores, and the young and old society divided into two camps.

The fact is that entirely novel ideas were coming to light in the midst of that time-worn French society, like the strange flowers that grow between the irregular pavements of a dark courtyard or between the crumbling stones of an ancient château.

They were English ideas: Gardens with endless paths, with clumps of trees, lawns, flower-beds, and

patches of turf; life in a cottage; morning excursions without powder or rouge, with a simple straw hat with a broad brim and a bluebell or marguerite for ornament; horsemen riding spirited horses, followed by jockeys in black caps, round jackets, and leather breeches; four-wheeled phaetons, which created a furore; princesses dressed like shepherdesses, actresses arrayed like queens; La Duthé, La Guimard, Sophie Arnould, La Prairie, and La Cléophile covering themselves with diamonds, while the dauphiness, the Princesse de Lamballe, Mesdames de Polignac, De Langeac, and D'Adhémar aspired only to cover themselves with flowers.

And at the aspect of that new society marching on to the unknown, Louis XV. bent his head lower and lower. In vain did the madcap countess dance around him, buzzing like a bee, light as a butterfly, gorgeous as a humming-bird. From time to time he painfully raised his heavy forehead, whereon the seal of death seemed to be spreading more and more with every instant.

For time was flying. It was the 3d of May, and on the 28th of June the Marquis de Chauvelin would have been dead just two months.

And then, as if everything were conspiring to add force to the fateful prediction, the Abbé de Beauvais had preached at the court, and in his sermon on the necessity of preparing for death, on the danger of impenitence at the last, he had exclaimed, —

"Forty days more, sire, and Nineveh will be destroyed!"

So that, after thinking of Monsieur de Chauvelin, the king would think of the Abbé de Beauvais. So that, after saying to the Duc d'Ayen, "On the 28th of June Chauvelin will have been dead two months," he would turn to the Duc de Richelieu and mutter,

"Forty days that devilish Abbé de Beauvais said, did he not?" And he would add, "I wish that those forty days had passed."

Nor was that all. The Almanach de Liège had said, —

"In the month of April one of the most favored of women will play her last rôle."

So that Madame du Barry acted as chorus to the king's lamentations, and said of the month of April what he said of the forty days, —

"I wish that this cursed month of April had passed."

During that cursed month of April, which so alarmed Madame du Barry, and during the forty days which were the king's passion, omens multiplied. The Genoese ambassador, whom the king met frequently, died very suddenly. The Abbé de Laville, having come to his *lever* to thank him for the office of Director of Foreign Affairs which he had given him, fell at his feet stricken with apoplexy. And lastly, while the king was out hunting the lightning struck very near him.

All these occurrences made him more and more depressed.

Some hope had been entertained that the return of spring would mend matters. Nature shaking off her shroud in May, the earth taking on its robe of green, the trees donning their spring costumes, the air filled with living atoms, the fiery breaths that pass with the breezes like souls in search of bodies, — all those might well restore animation to that inert mass and power of movement to that worn-out machine.

During an outing at Trianon the king was taken ill and was, by Lamartinière's orders, removed to Versailles, where his disease was recognized as smallpox.

A malignant fever supervened and complicated the situation.

On the 29th of April the first eruption appeared, and the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, hastened to Versailles.

It was a strange condition of affairs. The administration of the sacraments, if it should become necessary, could not take place *until after the expulsion of the concubine*, and that concubine, who belonged to the Jesuit party of which Christophe de Beaumont was the chief, had, as the archbishop himself had said, by bringing about the overthrow of Choiseul and the parliament, rendered such great services to the religion, that it was impossible in accordance with the canons to inflict dishonor upon her.

The leading spirits in that party were, beside Monsieur de Beaumont and Madame du Barry, the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc de Fronsac, Maupeou, and Terray.

All of them would be overthrown by the same blow that overthrew Madame du Barry. They had no motive therefore for declaring themselves against her.

Monsieur de Choiseul's party, on the other hand, which had ramifications everywhere, even at the king's bedside, demanded the expulsion of the favorite and a speedy confession. A very curious spectacle was thus presented, for it was the party of the *philosophes*, the Jansenists, and atheists which urged the king to confess, while the Archbishop of Paris, the pious folk, and the devotees desired him to refuse to confess.

Such was the strange condition of affairs when the archbishop presented himself on the 1st of May, at half-past eleven in the morning, and asked to see the sick king.

On learning that the archbishop had arrived, poor Madame du Barry fled.

The Duc de Richelieu went to meet the prelate, whose intentions were as yet unknown to him.

"Monseigneur," said the duke, "I entreat you not to alarm the king by the *theological proposition* that has frightened so many sick people to death. But if you are curious to hear about some charming little sins, sit you down there; I will confess in the king's stead, and will tell you of some, the like of which you have not heard since you have been Archbishop of Paris. But if my suggestion does not commend itself to you, if you absolutely insist on confessing the king and repeating at Versailles the scenes in which Monsieur the Bishop of Soissons took part at Metz, if you propose to dismiss Madame du Barry with notoriety, consider the sequel and your own interests. You assure the triumph of the Duc de Choiseul, your bitterest enemy, from whom Madame du Barry was instrumental in delivering you, and you persecute your friend to the profit of your enemy,—yes, monseigneur, your friend, and so truly your friend that only yesterday she said to me, 'If the archbishop will leave us in peace he shall have his cardinal's cap; I will undertake to procure it for him and will answer for the result.'"

The Archbishop of Paris allowed Monsieur de Richelieu to say what he had to say, for although he really agreed with him, it was essential that he should seem to yield to argument. Luckily the Duc d'Aumont, Madame Adelaide, and the Bishop of Senlis joined forces with the marshal and furnished the prelate with arms against himself. He seemed to yield, promised to say nothing, entered the king's apartments, and did not mention the subject of confession; which was so satisfactory to the august patient that he immediately sent for Madame du Barry to return, and kissed her fair hands, weeping for joy.

On the next day, May 2d, the king was slightly better; Madame du Barry had sent him her two physicians, Lorry and Bordeu, instead of Lamartinière, his regular physician. They had been instructed first of all to conceal from the king the nature of his disease, to say nothing as to his condition, and especially to banish from his mind any such idea as that he was sick enough to need to have recourse to the priests.

The improvement in the king's health allowed the countess to resume for a brief space her free and easy manners, her usual mode of speech and her customary endearments. But at the very moment when, by putting forth her whole store of animal spirits, she had succeeded in making the king smile, Lamartinière, who had not been deprived of his right of access to the king's presence, appeared in the doorway, and, being highly indignant at the preference accorded Lorry and Bordeu, walked straight to the king's side, felt his pulse, and shook his head.

The king made no objection, and watched him with terror. His terror increased when he saw Lamartinière's discouraging motion.

"Well, Lamartinière?" he asked.

"Well, sire, if my brethren have not told you that you are seriously ill, they are either fools or liars."

"What do you think is the matter with me, Lamartinière?"

"*Pardieu!* sire, it is not hard to tell: Your Majesty has the smallpox."

"And you say you have no hope, my friend?"

"I do not say that, sire; a doctor never despairs. I say simply that if Your Majesty is not the Most Christian King in name only, you should look to yourself."

"Very good," said the king.

He called Madame du Barry.

"You hear, my love," he said. "I have the small-pox, and it is a very dangerous disease, firstly, because of my age, and secondly, because of my other troubles. Lamartinière has just reminded me that I am the Most Christian King and the oldest son of the Church, my love. Perhaps we shall have to separate. I wish to prevent a scene like the one at Metz. Tell the Duc d'Aiguillon what I say to you, so that you and he can arrange for our parting quietly if I grow worse."

When the king was speaking thus, the whole Choiseul faction was beginning to complain aloud, accusing the archbishop of complaisance, and saying that he would allow the king to die without the sacraments in order not to disturb Madame du Barry.

These charges reached Monsieur de Beaumont's ears, and he, in order to put an end to them, determined to take up his residence at Versailles, in the convent of the Lazarists, to make an impression on the public, and be in a position to take advantage of the most favorable moment for his religious ceremonies, in order not to sacrifice Madame du Barry until the king's condition should be altogether desperate.

It was on the 3d of May that the archbishop returned to Versailles. Having arrived there, he waited.

Meanwhile, scandalous scenes were being enacted at the king's bedside. The Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon was of the same mind as the Archbishop of Paris, and desired that everything should be done quietly; but it was not so with the Bishop of Carcassonne, who played the zealot, renewing the scene at Metz years before, and crying from the housetops *that the sacraments must be administered to the king, that the concubine must be driven forth, that the canons of the church must be enforced, and*

that the king must set an example to Europe and Christian France, which he had scandalized.

"What right have you to force your opinions on me?" cried Monsieur de la Roche-Aymon, testily.

The bishop took the pastoral cross from his neck and put it almost under the prelate's nose.

"The right that this cross gives me," he said. "Learn to respect that right, monseigneur, and do not allow your king to die without the sacraments of the church, whose eldest son he is."

All this took place in Monsieur d'Aiguillon's presence. He realized what scandal such a discussion would cause if it should become public.

He entered the king's apartment.

"Well, duke, have you carried out my orders?"

"With regard to Madame du Barry, sire?"

"Yes."

"I preferred to wait until Your Majesty should repeat them. I shall never be in haste to separate the king from those who love him."

"Thanks, duke, but it must be done. Take the poor countess and escort her quietly to your country estate at Rueil. I shall be grateful to Madame d'Aiguillon for any attention she may show her."

Despite that very explicit command, Monsieur d'Aiguillon was still loath to hasten the favorite's departure, and concealed her in the château, announcing that she was to go on the following day. That announcement moderated the ecclesiastical exigencies to some extent.

It was a happy idea on the Duc d'Aiguillon's part, as it turned out, to keep Madame du Barry at Versailles, for, during the day of the fourth of May, the king asked for her so persistently that the duke confessed that she was still there.

"Send for her, then, send for her," cried the king.

And so Madame du Barry returned to the bedside for the last time.

The countess left Versailles weeping bitterly. The poor creature, who was good-hearted, amiable, and easy-going, loved Louis XV. as one loves a father.

Madame d'Aiguillon took Madame du Barry and her sister Mademoiselle du Barry in her carriage, and drove them to Rueil to await the result.

She was hardly out of the courtyard, when the king asked for her again.

"She has gone," he was told.

"Gone?" echoed the king; "then it is time for me to go too. Order prayers to be said at Sainte-Geneviève."

Monsieur de la Vrillière at once wrote to the parliament, which body had the right, in extreme cases, to order the ancient relic to be opened or closed.

The 5th and 6th of May passed without any mention of confession, viaticum, or extreme unction. The curé of Versailles presented himself with the purpose of preparing the king for that pious ceremony; but he fell in with the Duc de Fronsac, who gave him his *word as a gentleman* that he would throw him out of the window at the first word he uttered on the subject.

"If I am not killed by the fall, I shall come in again at the door," said the curé, "for it is my right."

But on the 7th, at three o'clock in the morning, the king himself imperatively demanded the presence of Abbé Mandoux, a poor priest with no taste for intrigue, a worthy ecclesiastic who had been given him for a confessor, and who was blind.

His confession lasted seventeen minutes.

The confession at an end, the Ducs de la Vrillière and D'Aiguillon attempted to delay the viaticum, but Lamar-

tinière, who had a special enmity against Madame du Barry because she had induced the king to take up with Lorry and Bordeu, approached the king and said: —

"I have seen Your Majesty in very difficult positions, sire, but I have never admired you as I do to-day. If you follow my advice you will finish at once what you have begun so well."

Thereupon the king ordered Mandoux to be recalled, and Mandoux gave him absolution.

As for the notorious atonement that was to crush Madame du Barry in solemn form, it was not mentioned. The grand almoner and the archbishop had agreed upon this formula which was proclaimed in presence of the sacred host: —

Although the king need account for his conduct to God alone, he declares that he repents having caused scandal among his subjects, and that he desires to live henceforth only to maintain the religion and the happiness of his people.

The royal family, increased by Madame Louise, who had come forth from her convent to care for her father, received the sacrament at the foot of the staircase.

While the king was receiving the sacraments, the dauphin, who was kept at a distance because he had not had the smallpox, wrote as follows to Abbé Terray: —

"Monsieur le Contrôleur-Général, — I beg you to cause two hundred thousand francs to be distributed among the poor in the various parishes of Paris, to pray for the king. If you deem this too much, deduct it from the allowances of madame la dauphine and myself.

Signed: Louis-Auguste."

During the 7th and 8th the patient grew worse. The king felt that his body was literally being torn in strips.

Abandoned by his courtiers, who dared not remain beside that living corpse, he had no other attendants than his three daughters, who did not leave him for an instant.

The king was terrified. In the horrible gangrene that attacked his whole body he saw a direct chastisement of heaven. To his mind the invisible hand that marked him with black spots was God's hand. In an access of delirium, all the more terrible because it was not the delirium of fever but of the thought, he saw flames, he saw the burning pit, and he called to his confessor, the poor blind priest, his only refuge, to hold the crucifix between him and the fiery lake. Then he would himself take the holy water, he himself would raise sheets and coverlids, he himself, with groans of terror, would pour the holy water over his whole body, then he would demand the crucifix, take it in both hands, kiss it fervently, and cry: "O Lord! Lord! intercede for me, the greatest sinner that ever lived."

In such terrible despairing agony he passed the whole day of the 9th. During that day, which was naught but one long confession, neither the priest nor his daughters left him. His body was eaten by the most disgusting gangrene, and the corpse-like king, still living, exhaled such an odor that two servants fell to the floor asphyxiated, and one of them died.

On the 10th, in the morning, his thigh-bones could be seen through the cracks in the flesh; three other servants fainted. Terror invaded Versailles. The whole household fled. There were no living beings in the palace save the three noble-hearted girls and the excellent priest.

The whole day of the 10th was one long agony. The king, already dead, could not make up his mind to die; you would have said that he was trying to throw himself

out of bed, anticipating the fall. At last, at five minutes to three, he drew himself up, held out his hands, fixed his eyes upon a certain point of the wall and cried: —

"Chauvelin! Chauvelin! it is not two months yet —" Then he fell back and died.

Great as was the courage with which God had filled the hearts of the three princesses and the priest, when the king was dead they deemed their task at an end; furthermore, all three of the princesses were infected with the disease that had killed the king.

The arrangements for the obsequies were intrusted to the grand master, who arranged everything without entering the palace.

No one could be found save the night-cart men of Versailles who dared place the king in the leaden coffin which was prepared for him. He was laid in that last abode, without ointment or essences, rolled in the sheets of the bed in which he died; then the leaden coffin was placed in a wooden casket and carried into the chapel.

On the 12th of May, what had been Louis XV. was taken to Saint-Denis; the coffin was in a large hunting carriage. A second carriage was occupied by the Duc d'Ayen and the Duc d'Aumont; in the third were the grand almoner and the curé of Versailles. The funeral procession consisted of a score of pages and about fifty grooms on horseback.

The cortége started from Versailles at eight in the evening and arrived at Saint-Denis at eleven. The body was lowered into the royal vault whence it was not to come forth until the day of the profanation of Saint-Denis, and the entrance to the vault was not only closed but caulked, so that no emanation from that human

carrion should make its way from the abode of the dead into the abodes of the living.

We have described elsewhere the glee of the Parisian populace at the death of Louis XIV. Their glee was no less great when they found that they were rid of him whom they had, thirty years earlier, named the Well-Beloved.

Some one rallied the curé of Sainte-Géneviève concerning the efficacy of the relic.

"What do you complain of?" he retorted. "Is he not dead?"

On the next day, Madame du Barry at Rueil received a letter of banishment.

Sophie Arnould learned at the same time of the king's death and the banishment of the favorite.

"Alas!" said she, "we have no father or mother now."

That was the only funeral discourse pronounced over the tomb of the grandson of Louis XIV.

THE WOMAN WITH THE VELVET NECKLACE.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1793.

Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann.
Sophia, his aunt.
Zacharias Werner, his friend.
Gottlieb Murr, leader of the orchestra at the Mannheim Theatre.
Antonia, his daughter.
Danton.
Robespierre.
Comtesse du Barry.
Citizen Fouquier, public prosecutor at Paris.
An Executioner.
The Landlady of the Quai aux Fleurs.
Monsieur Vestris, of the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin.
Arsène, a danseuse, mistress of Danton.
Eucharis, her maid.
The Physician to the Opéra at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre.

MADAME LA COMTESSE DU BARRY.

THE WOMAN WITH THE VELVET NECKLACE.

I.

THE ARSENAL.

On the 4th of December, 1846, my vessel having cast anchor on the preceding day in the Bay of Tunis, I awoke about five o'clock in the morning, conscious of one of those lowering clouds of profound melancholy which keep the eye moist and the breast swollen for a whole day.

That feeling was the result of a dream.

I jumped out of my bunk, I drew on a pair of trousers with feet, I went on deck, and I looked about me.

I hoped that the marvellous landscape that was exposed to my gaze would relieve my mind from its preoccupation, which was the more obstinate for the very reason that it had no real cause.

I had in front of me, within gunshot, the jetty extending from the Goletta fort to the fort of the Arsenal, leaving a narrow passage for vessels which desire to go from the gulf into the lake. This lake, whose waters are as blue as the azure of the heavens they reflect, was ruffled in certain places by the flapping wings of a flock of swans, while, upon stakes

planted at intervals to indicate shoal places, stood an occasional cormorant, perfectly motionless, like the birds we see carved on sepulchres. Suddenly he would let himself fall like a stone, dive for his prey, return to the surface with a fish in his beak, swallow the fish, remount his stake, and resume his silent immobility until another fish, passing within range, tempted his appetite, and, overcoming his indolence, caused him to disappear and reappear once more.

Meanwhile, at intervals of five minutes, the air would be streaked by a long file of flamingoes, whose diamond-shaped purple wings showed dark against the dull white of their bodies, and made them resemble a pack of cards composed entirely of aces of diamonds flying through the air in a single line.

On the horizon was Tunis, that is to say, a mass of square houses, without windows or openings of any sort, arranged like the seats of an amphitheatre, white as chalk, and outlined against the sky with extraordinary sharpness. On the left, like a vast crenellated wall, rose the Lead Mountains, whose name indicates their sombre color. At their feet crouched the mosque and village of Sidi-Fathallah. On the right could be distinguished the tomb of Saint-Louis and the spot where Carthage was, two of the grandest memorials in the history of the world. Astern of us the Montezuma rode at anchor, a magnificent steam frigate, with engines of four hundred and fifty horse power.

Certainly there was enough to divert the most preoccupied imagination. At sight of all that wealth of beauty one might well have forgotten yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. But my mind was ten years away, fixed obstinately upon a single thought which a dream had nailed in my brain.

My eye became fixed on vacancy. All that magnificent panorama gradually faded away as my gaze grew more and more vague. Soon I had ceased to see everything that really existed. Reality disappeared, and amid that misty void, as if beneath a fairy's wand, appeared a salon with white wainscoting, and in a recess, seated at a piano over which her fingers wandered carelessly, was a woman, at once inspired and pensive, a muse and a saint. I recognized that woman, and I murmured as if she could hear me, —

"I salute you, Marie, full of grace. My mind is with you."

And then, no longer trying to resist that white-winged angel who, like a beautiful vision, carrying me back to the days of my youth, revealed to me the pure features of that maiden, young wife, and mother, I yielded to the current of the stream called memory, which flows back to the past instead of flowing onward to the future.

Thereupon I was seized by that selfish impulse — selfish and consequently natural to man — which impels him not to keep a thought to himself, but to double the scope of his feelings by communicating them, and to pour into another heart the fluid, be it sweet or bitter, with which his own is filled.

I took a pen and I wrote, —

"On board the Véloce, in sight of Carthage and Tunis.
December 4, 1846.

"Madame, — Upon opening a letter dated from Carthage and Tunis, you will wonder who can have written to you from such a spot, and you will hope perhaps to receive an autograph of Regulus or Louis IX. Alas! madame, he who from so great a distance lays his humble souvenir at your feet is neither a hero nor a saint, and if he has ever shown

any resemblance to the Bishop of Hippone, whose tomb he visited three days since, that resemblance can be applicable only to the first part of that great man's life. It is true that, like him, he may redeem that first part of his life by the second. But it is very late already to do penance, and, in all probability, he will die as he has lived, not daring even to leave his confessions behind him, for while they might possibly bear being told, they could hardly be read.

"You have already turned to the signature, have you not, madame, and you know whom you have to deal with; so that now you are asking yourself how it happened that the author of 'Monte Cristo' and 'Les Mousquetaires,' standing between this magnificent lake which is the grave of a city and the poor monument which is a king's sepulchre, thought of writing to you, — to you, when at Paris, at your very door, he sometimes does not call upon you for a whole year at a time.

"In the first place, madame, Paris is Paris, that is to say, a sort of whirlpool, where one loses the memory of everything amid the noise that the people make in running to and fro, and the earth in revolving. At Paris, you see, I do as the rest of the world and the earth do; I run to and fro and revolve, to say nothing of the fact that, when I am neither running nor revolving, I am writing. But then, madame, it is a different matter, and when I am writing I am not so entirely apart from you as you think, for you are one of the few persons for whom I write, and it is a very unusual thing, if I do not say to myself when I finish a chapter that pleases me, or a book that is well received, 'Marie Nodier, that creature of rare and charming mind, will read that;' and I am proud when I say it, madame, for I hope that after you have read what I have written, I may perhaps grow a little taller in your mind.

"But to return to my thought, madame: I dreamed last night of you, forgetting the swell that rolled beneath a huge steam vessel which the government has loaned me, and upon which I am entertaining one of your friends and one of your admirers, Boulanger and my son, not to mention Giraud, Maquet, Chancel, and Desbarolles, who are included among

your acquaintances; as I was saying, I fell asleep, thinking of nothing in particular, and as I am almost always in the land of the Thousand and One Nights, a genie visited me and led me into a dream of which you were the queen. The place to which he took me, or rather took me back, madame, was much better than a palace, was much better than a kingdom; it was that kindly, excellent household at the Arsenal in the days of its happiness and joy, when our beloved Charles did the honors with all the freedom of ancient hospitality and our highly respected Marie with all the charm of modern hospitality.

"Ah! madame, be sure that when I wrote those lines I uttered a heartfelt sigh. Those were happy times for me. Your charming wit inspired everybody, and sometimes, I venture to say, myself more than anybody else. You see that it is an egotistical sentiment that leads me to address you. I borrowed something of your adorable gayety, as the pebble of the poet Saadi borrowed a portion of the rose's perfume.

"Do you remember Paul's archer's costume? Do you remember Francisque Michel's yellow shoes? Do you remember my son as a waterman? Do you remember the recess where the piano was and where you sang "Lazzara," that wonderful melody which you promised me, and which, be it said without reproach, you never gave me?

"As I am appealing to your memory, let us go still further: do you remember Fontaney and Alfred Johannot, those two veiled figures who always maintained their melancholy demeanor amid our laughter, for there is a vague foreboding of the tomb in men who are destined to die young. Do you remember Taylor sitting in a corner, motionless and dumb, wondering what new voyage he could undertake, to enrich France with a Spanish painting, a Greek bas-relief, or an Egyptian obelisk? Do you remember De Vigny, who at that time suspected his coming transfiguration perhaps, and disdained to mingle with the common herd of men? Do you remember Lamartine, standing in front of the fire and tossing the harmony of his noble lines at our feet? Do you

remember Hugo, looking at him and listening to him as Eteocles must have looked at and listened to Polynice, the only one among us with the smile of equality upon his lips, while Madame Hugo, playing with her lovely hair, half reclined on the couch, as if fatigued by the share of glory that fell to her lot?

"And then, in the midst of it all, your mother, so simple and kindly and sweet; your aunt, Madame de Tercy, so witty and good-humored; Dauzats, so fanciful and turgid and enthusiastic; Barye, so alone amid the noise, that it always seemed as if his thought was sent by his body in search of one of the seven wonders of the world; Boulanger, to-day so depressed, to-morrow so cheerful, always such a great painter and poet, always so true a friend in his times of cheerfulness and of depression alike; and lastly the little girl gliding about among the poets, painters, musicians, great men, men of intellect and scholars; the little girl whom I used to take in the hollow of my hand and offer to you as if she were a statuette by Barre or by Pradier! Ah! *Mon Dieu!* what has become of them all, madame?

"The Lord breathed upon the keystone of the arch and the magic edifice crumbled, and those who were within fled, and the very spot where everything was alive and blooming and flourishing is now a desert.

"Fontaney and Alfred Johannot are dead, Taylor has given up travelling, De Vigny has withdrawn from sight, Lamartine is a deputy, Hugo a peer of France, and Boulanger, my son, and myself are at Carthage, whence I look toward you, madame, as I heave the heartfelt sigh I mentioned just now, which, despite the wind that whirls away like a cloud the dying smoke of our vessel, will not overtake those cherished memories which dark-winged time silently enwraps in the grayish mist of the past.

"O springtime, youth of the year! O youth, springtime of life!

"Ah, well! that is the vanished world that my dream brought back to me last night, as bright and visible, but alas! at the same time as impalpable as the atoms that dance

in the sunbeam that creeps into a dark room through a chink in the shutter.

"And now, madame, you are no longer surprised at this letter, are you? The present would capsize constantly were it not held in equilibrium by the weight of hope and the counterpoise of memory, and, it may be luckily or unluckily, I am one of those in whom memory is stronger than hope.

"Now let us talk of something else; for while we may be permitted to be sad, it is only on condition that we do not darken the lives of others with our melancholy. What is my friend Boniface doing? Eight or ten days ago I visited a town which will cause him many a weary hour when he finds its name in the pages of that base usurer whom we call Sallust. That town is Constantine, the ancient Cyrta, a marvel of architecture built on the summit of a rock, by a race of fantastic animals, I doubt not, with the wings of an eagle and human hands, such as Herodotus and Levaillant, those two great travellers, saw and described.

"Then we passed a little time at Utica and much at Biserta. Giraud made a portrait of a Turkish notary in the latter city, and Boulanger of his chief clerk. I send them to you, madame, so that you may compare them with the notaries and chief clerks of Paris. I doubt whether the result will be favorable to the latter.

"I fell into the water while hunting flamingoes and swans, an accident that might have had unpleasant results in the Seine, which is probably frozen solid at this moment, but in Cato's Lake it was inconvenient simply because it made me take a bath with my clothes on, to the great astonishment of Alexandre, Giraud, and the governor of the town, who were following our boat with their eyes from a terrace, and could not understand an occurrence which they attributed to a mental vagary on my part, whereas it was due to the displacement of my centre of gravity.

"I emerged from the water like the cormorants I mentioned just now, madame; like them I disappeared, like them I returned to the surface! but I had not, as they had, a fish in my beak.

"Five minutes after it happened I had forgottten all about it, and was as dry as Monsieur Valéry, the sun was so obliging in its attentions.

"Oh! I would that I could guide a beam of this lovely sunlight to you, madame, wherever you may be, were it only to make a sprig of myosotis bloom upon your window-sill.

"Adieu, madame; forgive this long letter. I am not in the habit of doing such things, and, like the child who was defending himself against the charge of having made the world, I promise you that I will not do it again; but why did the concierge of heaven leave open the ivory gate through which golden dreams come forth?

"Please to accept, madame, the homage of my most respectful sentiments.

"ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

"I press Jules' hand warmly."

Why do I quote that essentially private letter? Because before telling my readers the story of the woman with the velvet necklace, it was necessary for me to throw open to them the doors of the Arsenal, that is to say of the home of Charles Nodier.

And now that that door has been opened by the hand of his daughter, and we are therefore sure of a welcome, "Let him who loves me follow me."

At the farther end of Paris stands a large building of gloomy and forbidding appearance, called the Arsenal, a sort of continuation of the Quai des Célestins, overlooking the river, and with Rue Morland at its rear.

A part of the ground on which that substantial edifice is built was called, before the city moats were dug, the Champ-au-Plâtre. Paris, one day when preparations for war were in progress, purchased the field and built sheds there to house its artillery. About 1533 François I. discovered that he was in need of cannon, and con-

ceived the idea of having them cast for himself. So he borrowed one of the sheds from his faithful city, promising of course to restore it as soon as the casting was completed. Then, on the pretext of hastening the work, he borrowed another, and then a third, always with the same promise; but in the end, acting upon the principle that what is worth taking is worth keeping, he unceremoniously kept the three buildings he had borrowed.

Twenty years later about twenty thousand pounds of powder that were stored there took fire. There was a terrific explosion. Paris trembled as Catania trembles on the days when Enceladus changes his position. Stones were hurled as far as Faubourg Saint-Marceau. The roaring of the terrible thunder caused a commotion at Melun. The houses in the vicinity wavered for a moment as if they were drunk, then fell in. Fish died in the river, killed by the sudden shock, and thirty people, who were blown into the air by the hurricane of flame, fell to the ground in thousands of pieces; a hundred and fifty were wounded. How did the horrible thing happen? What was the cause of the disaster? No one ever knew, and in view of the general ignorance, it was imputed to the Protestants.

Charles IX. caused the buildings to be rebuilt on a more extensive scale. A great builder was Charles IX. The gallery of the Louvre was built under his auspices, and the Innocents' fountain hewn by Jean Goujon, who was killed there by a spent ball, as every one knows. The great artist and great poet would certainly have completed the work, had not God, who had certain questions to ask him on the subject of August 24, 1572, summoned him.

His successors resumed the construction of the buildings where he had left it, and went on with it. In

1584, under Henri III., the doorway facing the Quai des Célestins, was carved. It was flanked by pillars in the shape of cannon, and on the marble shelf above could be read this distich of Nicolas Bourbon, which Santeuil sought to purchase at the price of the scaffold: —

"Ætna hic Henrico vulcania tela ministrat,
Tela giganteos debellatura furores; — "

Which may be translated thus: —

"Ætna forges here the shafts with which Henri will overwhelm the savage fury of the giants."

And, in truth, after crushing the giants of the League, Henri laid out the lovely garden which we see on the maps of the time of Louis XIII., while Sully established his ministerial quarters there, and presided at the painting and gilding of the beautiful salons which today form the library of the Arsenal.

In 1823 Charles Nodier was chosen director of that library, and left Rue de Choiseul, where he then lived, to take up his abode in his new quarters.

A most delightful man was Nodier. Without a vice, but full of faults, those fascinating faults in which the originality of a man of genius consists, lavish, heedless, and an idler, — an idler as Figaro was indolent, with hearty enjoyment.

Nodier knew almost everything that it is given to man to know. Moreover, Nodier had the privilege of the man of genius. When he did not know he invented, and what he invented was far more ingenious, more highly colored, more probable than the reality.

Moreover, though full of systems, and an enthusiastic dealer in paradoxes, Nodier was in no sense a propagandist, and it was for his own amusement only that he

was paradoxical, for himself only that he constructed systems. If his systems were adopted and his paradoxes understood, he immediately varied them and set about making others.

Nodier was like the man in Terence to whom nothing human was without interest. He loved for the sake of loving. He loved as the sun shines, as the brook murmurs, as the flower gives perfume. Whatever was good, whatever was beautiful, whatever was great appealed to his sympathies. Even in evil he sought what there was of good, just as the chemist extracts a salutary medicine from the poisonous plant, from the heart of the very poison itself.

How many times had Nodier been in love? It would have been impossible for him to answer the question himself. Moreover, great poet that he was, he constantly confounded dreams with realities. Nodier had so fondly caressed the caprices of his imagination that he had come at last to believe in their existence. To him "Thérèse Aubert," the "Fée aux Miettes," and "Inès de la Sierra" were real persons. They were his daughters as Marie was. They were Marie's sisters, only Madame Nodier had had no part in their creation. Like Jupiter, Nodier had evolved all those Minervas from his brain.

But not human beings alone, not Eve's daughter and Adam's sons alone did Nodier animate with his life-giving breath. Nodier had invented an animal and christened it. He had then, on his own authority, without concerning himself as to what God would say, endowed it with immortality.

That animal was the taratantaleo.

You do not know the taratantaleo, do you? Nor do I; but Nodier knew it, knew it by heart. He would

describe to you the taratantaleo's manners and customs and caprices. He would have told you of its love affairs, if, from the moment he discovered that the taratantaleo bore within him the principle of everlasting life, he had not condemned him to celibacy, reproduction being useless where resurrection exists.

How had Nodier discovered the taratantaleo?

I am about to tell you.

At eighteen years of age Nodier was interested in entomology. Nodier's life was divided into six different phases: —

First he devoted himself to natural history: "La Bibliothèque Entomologique."

Then to philology: "Le Dictionnaire des Onomatopées."

Then to politics: "La Napoleone."

Then to religious philosophy: "Les Méditations du Cloître."

Then to poetry: "Les Essais d'un Jeune Barde."

Then to novel-writing: "Jean Sbogar," "Smarra," "Trilby," "Le Peintre de Salzbourg," "Mademoiselle de Marsan," "Adèle," "Le Vampire," "Le Songe d'Or," "Les Souvenirs de Jeunesse," "Le Roi de Bohème et ses Sept Châteaux," "Les Fantaisies du Docteur Néophobus," and a thousand other delightful things which you know, which I know, but whose names do not come to my pen.

Nodier then was in the first phase of his labors. He was engaged in the study of entomology, and lived on the sixth floor, one floor higher than the poet Béranger. He was making experiments upon infinitely small creatures under the microscope, and he discovered a whole world of invisible animalculæ long before Raspail. One day, after subjecting to a careful scrutiny water,

wine, vinegar, cheese, bread, everything in fact upon which experiments are usually made, he picked up a little moist sand from the gutter and placed it on the slide of his microscope, then put his eye to the lens.

Thereupon he saw a strange animal, shaped like a velocipede, moving across the slide, having two wheels which he worked very rapidly. Had he a stream to cross? His wheels served the same purpose as the paddle-wheels of a steamboat. Had he a tract of dry land to cross? His wheels served the same purpose as the wheels of a cab. Nodier watched him, dissected him, sketched him, and analyzed him for so long a time that, suddenly remembering that he had an appointment, he hurried away, leaving his microscope, his grain of sand, and the taratantaleo, whose world it was.

When Nodier returned home it was late. He was tired, so he went to bed and slept as one sleeps at eighteen. Not until he opened his eyes the next morning, therefore, did he think of his grain of sand, his microscope, and his taratantaleo.

Alas! during the night the sand had dried and the poor taratantaleo, which undoubtedly required some dampness to support life, was dead. His tiny body lay on its side, the wheels were motionless. The steamboat no longer moved, the velocipede had stopped.

But, dead as he was, the animal was none the less an interesting variety of the *ephemera*, and his corpse was as well worth preserving as that of a mammoth or a mastodon; but, as you will see, it was necessary to take vastly greater precautions to handle a creature a hundred times smaller than a flesh-worm, than to move an animal ten times larger than an elephant.

Nodier used the point of a pen, therefore, to transport

the grain of sand from the slide of the microscope to a small pasteboard box, destined to be the taratantaleo's sepulchre.

He promised himself that he would show the body to the first scientist who should venture to climb up his six flights of stairs.

There are so many things for a youth of eighteen to think about, that he may be forgiven for forgetting the dead body of an ephemeral insect. Nodier forgot the taratantaleo's body for three months, six months, perhaps a year.

But one day he happened to notice the box. He was desirous to see what change a year had produced in the animal. It was a cloudy day and the rain was falling heavily. In order to see better, he went to the window and emptied the contents of the little box onto the slide of his microcsope.

The body was still lying on the sand motionless; but time, which has so great an effect upon larger creatures, seemed to have overlooked the infinitely small.

Nodier was looking at his treasure, when suddenly a drop of rain, driven by the wind, fell upon the slide of the microscope and moistened the grain of sand.

Thereupon, at the first touch of that revivifying moisture, it seemed to Nodier that his taratantaleo came to life again, that he moved one feeler, then another; that he turned one of his wheels; that he turned both wheels; that he recovered his centre of gravity; that his movements became regular; in a word, that he lived.

The miracle of resurrection was accomplished, not after three days, but after a year.

Ten times Nodier repeated the same test. Ten times

the sand dried and the taratantaleo died. Ten times the sand was moistened, and ten times the taratantaleo came to life.

It was not one of the *ephemera* which Nodier had discovered, but an immortal. In all probability his taratantaleo had seen the Deluge and was destined to be present at the Last Judgment.

Unluckily, one day when Nodier was preparing, perhaps for the twentieth time, to repeat his experiment, a gust of wind carried away the dry grain of sand, and with it the corpse of the phenomenal taratantaleo.

Nodier picked up many grains of moist sand from his gutter and elsewhere, but it was of no avail. He never found the duplicate of what he had lost. The taratantaleo was the only one of his kind, and, lost to mankind, he lived only in Nodier's memory. But he lived there in such a way as never to be effaced.

We have spoken of Nodier's faults. His dominant fault, in Madame Nodier's eyes at least, was his bibliomania. That fault, which was Nodier's joy, drove his wife to despair.

The difficulty was that all the money Nodier earned went for books. How many times, when he had gone out to collect two or three hundred francs that were absolutely necessary for the household expenses, did he return home with a rare volume, an only copy!

The money had stuck fast in the till of Techener or Guillemot.

Madame Nodier would attempt to scold him. But Nodier would take his volume from his pocket, open it, close it, pat it with his hand, point out to his wife an error in printing that proved the genuineness of the book, saying, —

"Remember, my dear love, that I can find three

hundred francs another time, while such another book as this, hum! such another book, hùm! is not to be found. Ask Pixérécourt."

Pixérécourt was Nodier's great admiration, for Nodier always adored melodrama. He called Pixérécourt the Corneille of the boulevards.

Pixérécourt called on Nodier almost every morning. The morning at Nodier's was given over to visits from bibliophiles. There were wont to assemble the Marquis de Ganay, the Marquis de Château-Giron, the Marquis de Chalabre, the Comte de Labédoyère, Bérard, the man of the Elzevirs, who, in his leisure moments, revised the Charter of 1830, the bibliophile Jacob, the learned Weiss of Besançon, the universal scholar Peignot of Dijon; and all the foreign scholars, who, immediately on their arrival in Paris, procured an introduction or introduced themselves to that circle, whose reputation was European.

There they all consulted Nodier, the oracle of the assemblage. They showed him books. They asked him for memoranda concerning them. It was his favorite amusement. The scholars of the Institute seldom appeared at those gatherings. They looked upon Nodier with jealousy. Nodier combined wit and poetic talent with learning, and that is an offence which the Academy of Sciences is no more ready to pardon than the Académie Française.

And then Nodier often jested and he sometimes bit. One day he wrote "Le Roi de Bohème et ses Sept Châteaux." That time he carried the day. Nodier was supposed to have fallen out forever with the Institute. Not at all. The Academy of Timbuctoo brought about Nodier's admission to the Académie Française. Sisters owe something to each other.

After two or three hours of work that was always easy to him, of covering ten or twelve pages of paper about six inches by four, with legible, even handwriting, free from erasures, Nodier would go out.

Once out of the house, Nodier prowled about at random, almost always following the line of the quays, however, but crossing and recrossing the bridges, according to the topographical location of the various bookstalls. From the bookstalls he would go to the shops of the publishers, and thence to the bookbinders.

For Nodier was a connoisseur not only in books but in bindings. The masterpieces of Gaseon under Louis XIII., of Desseuil under Louis XIV., of Pasdeloup under Louis XV., and of Derome under Louis XV. and Louis XVI. were so familiar to him that he could distinguish them with his eyes closed, simply by touching them. It was Nodier who had revived the art of binding, which ceased to be an art under the revolutionary government and the Empire. It was he who encouraged and guided the restorers of the art, the Thouvenins, Bradels, Niedrées, Bozonnets, and Legrands. Thouvenin, dying of consumption, rose from his deathbed to cast one last glance at the bindings he was making for Nodier.

Nodier's peregrinations almost always ended at Crozet's or Techener's, those brothers-in-law, parted by rivalry, between whom his placid personality intervened. There the bibliophiles assembled to discuss books, editions, sales. There they made exchanges. As soon as Nodier appeared there was a shout of welcome; but as soon as he opened his mouth, absolute silence. Thereupon Nodier would talk and give utterance to paradoxes *de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis.*

In the evening, after the family dinner, Nodier usually worked in the dining-room between three candles arranged in the shape of a triangle, never more, never less. We have told what sort of paper he used and described his handwriting. He always wrote with goose-quills. Nodier had a horror of steel pens, as of all new inventions in general. Gas made him furious; steam exasperated him. He discovered an infallible sign of the speedy end of the world in the destruction of the forests and the exhaustion of the coal mines. In his fierce tirades against progress and civilization, Nodier's impassioned warmth was particularly resplendent and his vehemence overwhelming.

About half-past nine in the evening Nodier went out. Then he did not follow the line of the quays, but the line of the boulevards. He went to the Porte-Saint-Martin, the Ambigu, or the Funambules, preferably the last-named. It was Nodier who deified Debureau. To Nodier's mind there were but three actors in the world, — Debureau, Potier, and Talma. Potier and Talma were dead, but Debureau remained and consoled Nodier for the loss of the other two.

Nodier had seen the "Bœuf Enragé" a hundred times.

Every Sunday Nodier breakfasted with Pixérécourt. There he met his callers, — the bibliophile Jacob, king while Nodier was not there, vice-king when Nodier appeared; the Marquis de Ganay, the Marquis de Chalabre.

The Marquis de Ganay was a fickle-minded, capricious collector, who loved a book as a roué in the days of the Regency loved a woman, simply to possess it; and when he obtained it he was faithful for a month, — not faithful but enthusiastic, — carrying it in his pocket, stopping his friends to show it to them, putting it

under his pillow, and waking up in the middle of the night and lighting his candle to gloat over it, but never reading it; always envious of Pixérécourt's books, which Pixérécourt refused to sell him at any price; and revenging himself for that refusal by purchasing at Madame de Castellane's sale an autograph that Pixérécourt had craved for ten years.

"Never mind!" cried Pixérécourt in a rage, "I will have it."

"What?" asked the Marquis de Ganay.

"Your autograph."

"And when, pray?"

"*Parbleu!* at your death."

And Pixérécourt would have kept his word if the Marquis de Ganay had not thought it best to survive him.

As for the Marquis de Chalabre, he had but one ambition. That was to possess a Bible that nobody owned, but that ambition was none the less keen. He tormented Nodier so, urging him to tell him where he could procure a copy which had no fellow, that Nodier at last did even better than the marquis desired. He told him of a copy that did not exist.

The Marquis de Chalabre immediately set out to find that copy.

Christopher Columbus displayed no more ardor in his attempts to discover America, Vasco de Gama was not more persistent in his search for the Indies than the Marquis de Chalabre in the pursuit of his Bible. But America actually existed between latitude 70 degrees north and latitude 53 and 54 degrees south; India really lay on this and the other side of the Ganges; whereas the Marquis de Chalabre's Bible was situated in no latitude, and did not lie on either side of the

Seine. The result was that Vasco de Gama found India, that Christopher Columbus discovered America, but that the marquis sought in vain from north to south and from east to west. He did not find his Bible.

The more fruitless the search the more ardently the Marquis de Chalabre pursued it.

He had offered five hundred francs for it. He had offered a thousand francs. He had offered two thousand, four thousand, ten thousand francs. All the bibliographers were in a terrible pother on the subject of that wretched Bible. They wrote to Germany and to England. No result. They would not have given themselves so much trouble for a note from the Marquis de Chalabre, but they would simply have replied, "There is no such Bible." But a note from Nodier was a very different matter. If Nodier had said, "Such a Bible is in existence," the Bible undoubtedly existed. The pope might be mistaken, but Nodier was infallible.

The search lasted three years. Every Sunday the Marquis de Chalabre said to Nodier as they breakfasted together at Pixérécourt's, —

"By the way, my dear Charles, about that Bible — "

"Well?"

"It can't be found!"

"*Quære et invenies*," Nodier would reply.

And the bibliomaniac would resume his search with renewed ardor, but he found nothing.

At last they brought the Marquis de Chalabre a Bible.

It was not the one mentioned by Nodier, but there was only a year's difference in the date. It was not printed at Kehl, but it was printed at Strasburg, only a league away. It was not a unique copy, it is true;

but the only other one in existence was in a monastery of the Druses in Lebanon. The Marquis de Chalabre carried the Bible to Nodier and asked his opinion.

"*Dame!*" replied Nodier, seeing that the marquis was quite ready to go mad if he had not some Bible, "take this one, my dear friend, as it 's impossible to find the other."

The Marquis de Chalabre purchased the Bible for two thousand francs, had it splendidly rebound, and placed it in a special case.

When he died, the Marquis de Chalabre left his library to Mademoiselle Mars. Mademoiselle Mars, who was nothing less than a bibliomaniac, requested Merlin to catalogue all the books belonging to the deceased and have them sold. Merlin, who was the most honest man on earth, called upon Mademoiselle Mars one day with thirty or forty thousand francs in bank-notes in his hand.

He had found them in a sort of portfolio arranged in the magnificent binding of that almost unique Bible.

"Why," I asked Nodier, "did you play that joke on the poor Marquis de Chalabre, you are so little given to practical joking?"

"Because he was ruining himself, my friend, and because he had n't thought of anything else during the three years that he was engaged in the quest for his Bible. At the end of the three years he spent two thousand francs. During the next three he would have spent fifty thousand."

Now that we have shown our beloved Charles as he appeared during the week and on Sunday morning, let us describe him as he was on Sunday from six o'clock in the afternoon until midnight.

How did I make Nodier's acquaintance?

In the same way that everybody else did. He rendered me a service. It was in 1827, and I had just finished "Christine." I knew no one in the departments, no one at the theatre. My official position, instead of being of assistance to me in attaining the Comédie-Française, was a hindrance. I had written, two or three days earlier, this last line, which has been so loudly hissed and so loudly applauded:—

"Eh bien,—j'en ai pitié, mon père: qu'on l'achève!"

Below that line I had written, THE END. There was nothing more for me to do but to read my piece to messieurs the king's actors, and to be accepted or rejected by them.

Unfortunately at that time the management of the Comédie-Française was, like the government of Venice, republican but aristocratic, and not every one who sought gained access to their most serene highnesses the committee.

There was an examiner whose duty it was to read the works of young men who had done nothing as yet, and who, consequently, were not entitled to have their work read by the committee until it had been examined; but the traditions of the drama contained such doleful stories of manuscripts awaiting their turn to be read for one or two, and even three years, that I, being familiar with Dante and Milton, dared not risk being consigned to that purgatory, trembling lest my poor "Christine" should go to increase the number of

"Questi sciaurati che mai non fur vivi."

I had heard Nodier spoken of as the born protector of every unborn poet. I asked Baron Taylor for a line to introduce me to him. He sent it to me. A week

later my play was read at the Théâtre-Français, and was almost accepted.

I say almost, because there were in "Christine," considering the time when it was written, that is to say the year of grace 1827, such literary enormities, that messeieurs the king's actors in ordinary dared not accept me on their own authority, but subordinated their opinion to that of Monsieur Picard, the author of "La Petite Ville."

Monsieur Picard was one of the oracles of the time.

Firmin escorted me to Monsieur Picard. Monsieur Picard received me in a library supplied with all the editions of his works and adorned with his bust. He took my manuscript, made an appointment with me for that day week, and dismissed me.

A week later, hour for hour, I presented myself at Monsieur Picard's door. Monsieur Picard evidently expected me; he greeted me with a smile like Rigobert's in "Maison à Vendre."

"Monsieur," he said to me, handing me my manuscript neatly rolled, "have you any means of subsistence?"

"Yes, monsieur," I replied. "I have a small place in Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans' household."

"Very good!" he said, putting my roll in my hands with much warmth of manner, and taking my hands at the same time, "go back to your desk, my boy."

And delighted at having said a bright thing, he rubbed his hands, indicating with a gesture that my audience was at an end.

I owed an acknowledgment to Nodier none the less. I called at the Arsenal. Nodier received me, as he received every one, with a smile. But there be smiles and smiles, as Molière says.

I may forget Picard's smile some day, but I shall never forget Nodier's.

I was determined to prove to Nodier that I was not so utterly unworthy his patronage as he might think after what Picard had said to me. I left my manuscript with him. The next day I received a delightful letter, which restored all my courage and invited me to the evenings at the Arsenal.

Those evenings at the Arsenal were most charming functions, to which no pen can ever do justice. They were on Sundays, and really began at six o'clock.

At six o'clock the table was set. The regular guests were the founders of the meetings: Cailleux, Taylor, and Francis Wey, whom Nodier loved like a son; then there were generally one or two specially invited guests, and in addition whoever chose to come.

Once you were admitted to that charming household on a footing of intimacy, you dined with Nodier at your own pleasure. There were always two or three covers laid for chance guests. If the number proved to be insufficient, a fourth was added, and a fifth and a sixth. If it was necessary to lengthen the table, it was lengthened. But woe to him who made the thirteenth! He was pitilessly relegated to a small table, unless a fourteenth came and relieved him from his penance.

Nodier had his foibles; he preferred brown bread to white, pewter to silver plate, tallow candles to wax.

No one paid any attention to them except Madame Nodier, who saw that he had what he wanted.

After a year or two I became one of the intimate friends of whom I spoke just now. I was at liberty to call, without warning, at the dinner hour; I was received with joyous shouts that left me in no doubt as to my

welcome, and they gave me a seat at table, or rather I took a seat between Madame Nodier and Marie.

After a certain time, what was only a privilege became a vested right. If I arrived late, if they were at table and my place was taken, they apologized to the usurper, my place was given up to me, and, faith! he whom I displaced found a seat where he could.

Nodier maintained that my presence was a stroke of good fortune for him, in that I made it unnecessary for him to talk. But if it was good fortune for him, it certainly was ill fortune for the others. Nodier was the most delightful talker that ever lived. It was of no use to do to my conversation all that you do to a fire to make it blaze, blow it and poke it and throw on the steel filings that make the mind give forth sparks like those of the forge; there was *verve*, energy, youth, but there was not that kindly wit, that inexpressible charm, that infinite grace in which, as in a snare, the bird-catcher captures all sorts of birds, large and small alike. In a word, I was not Nodier.

I was a makeshift with which they had to be content, that was all.

But sometimes I sulked, sometimes I would not talk, and when I refused, Nodier, as it was his own house, was compelled to talk; then everybody listened, small children and grown men and women. It was a combination of Walter Scott and Perrault, it was the scholar at daggers drawn with the poet, memory contending with imagination. Not only was Nodier entertaining to listen to, he was delightful to look at, as well. His long slender body, his long thin arms, his long white hands, his long face, overflowing with melancholy benevolence, — all were in harmony with his slightly drawling speech, in which there was at certain times a

marked Franche-Comtois accent which Nodier never entirely lost. Ah! then the stream of talk was inexhaustible, always new, never the same thing twice over. Time, space, history, nature were to Nodier the Fortunatus' purse into which Pierre Schlemill plunged his hands again and again and never found them empty. He had known everybody: Danton, Charlotte Corday, Gustavus III., Cagliostro, Pius VI., Catherine II., Frederic the Great, and the rest. Like the Comte de Saint-Germain and the taratantaleo, he had been present at the creation of the world and come down through the centuries, changing his form. Indeed he had a most ingenious theory on the subject of that change of form. According to Nodier, dreams were simply a reminiscence of days passed in another planet, of something that happened long ago. According to Nodier, the most fantastic dreams corresponded to actual occurrences in bygone ages in Saturn, Venus, or Mercury; the strangest images were simply the phantoms of figures that had made a lasting impression upon our immortal souls. When he first visited the museum of fossils at the Jardin des Plantes, he cried out at the sight of animals he had seen in the deluge of Deucalion and Pyrrha, and sometimes he went so far as to admit that, observing the tendency of the Templars to universal empire, he had advised Jacques Molay to conquer his ambition. It was not his fault that Jesus Christ was crucified; he alone among his followers had warned him of Pilate's evil designs upon him. Nodier had been especially favored in meeting the Wandering Jew: the first time at Rome, in the days of Gregory VII.; the second time in Paris on the eve of St. Bartholomew, and the last time at Vienne in Dauphiné; and he had some most precious documents concerning him. And on that sub-

ject he corrected an error into which scholars and poets had fallen, especially Edgar Quinet. The name of the man with five sons was not Ahasuerus, which is half Greek and half Latin, but Isaac Laquedem. He could speak with assurance on that point, as he had the information from his own mouth. Then, from politics, from philosophy, from tradition, he would pass to natural history. Ah! how far Nodier outstripped in that science Herodotus, Pliny, Marco Polo, Buffon, and Lacépède! He had known spiders beside which Pélisson's spider was nothing. He had been intimate with frogs, compared with which Methuselah was only a child. Lastly, he had had business with caymans beside which the *tarasque* was only a lizard.

And then, too, such things happened to Nodier as happen only to men of genius. One day, when he was hunting for lepidoptera, during his sojourn in Styria, a land of granite cliffs and trees hoary with age, he climbed a tree in order to reach a cavity that he noticed, thrust his hand into the cavity, — as he was in the habit of doing, and most imprudently too, for one day he withdrew his arm from such a cavity decorated with a serpent that had coiled around it, — one day, as we were saying, having found a cavity, he thrust in his hand and felt something flabby and sticky, which yielded to the pressure of his fingers. He quickly drew his hand back and looked in: a pair of eyes gleamed with a dull flame in the cavity. Nodier believed in the devil; and so, when he saw those two eyes which were not unlike Charon's blazing eyes, as described by Dante, Nodier's first impulse was to fly. Then he reflected, thought better of it, took a hatchet, and, after measuring the depth of the hole, began to make an opening at the point where he supposed the unknown

object would be found. At the fifth or sixth blow of the hatchet the blood flowed from the tree precisely as the blood flowed from Tasso's enchanted forest under the sword of Tancred. But it was not a lovely Amazon that met his gaze, but a huge toad stuck fast in the tree, into which he had probably been carried by the wind when he was about the size of a bee. How long had he been there? Two hundred, three hundred, five hundred years perhaps. He was five inches long and three inches wide.

Another time — it was in Normandie, when he and Taylor were making the tour of France — he went into a church. From one of the arches hung an enormous spider and an enormous toad. He applied to a peasant for information concerning the strange couple.

And this is what the old peasant told him, after leading him to one of the flagstones in the floor of the church, whereon was carved a recumbent knight in his armor.

The knight was a baron of the olden time who had left such an unsavory memory in the country that the boldest men turned aside in order not to step on his tomb, not from respect but from fear. Above the tomb, in fulfilment of a vow made by the knight on his death-bed, a lamp was to burn night and day, the dead man having left for the purpose a sum of money which was much more than sufficient therefor.

One fine day, or rather one fine night, when, as it happened, the curé was unable to sleep, looking from his chamber window, which looked on the church, he saw the lamp flicker and go out. He attributed the matter to an accident, and thought no more about it that night.

But the next night, as he happened to wake about

two o'clock, it occurred to him to see if the lamp was burning. He got out of bed, went to the window, and saw *with his eyes* that the church was plunged in the most profound darkness.

That peculiar circumstance, occurring twice in forty-eight hours, assumed a certain seriousness. The next morning at daybreak, the curé sent for the beadle and accused him flatly of having put the oil in his salad instead of in the lamp. The beadle swore by all the gods that it was not so; that he had conscientiously filled the lamp every evening during the fifteen years he had held his office, and that it must be a trick of the wicked knight, who, after tormenting the living while he lived, was beginning to torment them again three hundred years after his death.

The curé declared that he placed implicit confidence in the beadle's word, but that he desired nevertheless to be present when the lamp was filled that evening. Consequently, at nightfall, the oil was poured into the receptacle and the lamp lighted in the curé's presence. When the lamp was lighted the curé locked the door of the church with his own hand, put the key in his pocket, and went home.

He took a breviary, made himself comfortable in a capacious arm-chair by the window, and waited, glancing alternately at the book and the church.

About midnight he saw the light which shone through the windows grow dim and die out.

That time it was certain that the occurrence was due to some strange, mysterious, inexplicable cause, in which the poor beadle could have had no part.

For a moment the curé thought that thieves had broken into the church, and were stealing the oil. But assuming that the offence was committed by thieves,

they must be very honest rascals to confine themselves to stealing the oil and to leave the consecrated vessels unmolested.

It was not the work of thieves therefore. It must be due to some cause other than any that could be imagined, — a supernatural cause perhaps. The curé determined to discover the cause, whatever it might be.

The next evening he himself poured the oil into the lamp to make sure that he was not the victim of any trick of legerdemain. Then, instead of going out as he had done the night before, he hid in a confessional.

The hours passed, the lamp shone with a calm, undisturbed light. The clock struck twelve.

The curé thought that he heard a slight noise, as if a stone were moved from its place. Then he saw the shadow of an animal with gigantic paws, which shadow climbed a pillar, ran along the cornice, appeared for an instant against the arched roof, then slid down the cord and took up its position on the lamp, which began to grow dim, flickered, and went out.

The curé found himself in the most absolute darkness. He realized that he must repeat the experiment and take up a position nearer the scene of action.

Nothing could be easier. Instead of hiding in the confessional which was on the opposite side of the church from the lamp, he had only to hide in the one that was only a few steps away.

He did everything the next night as before, therefore, except that he changed to the other confessional and provided himself with a dark lantern.

Up to midnight there was the same tranquillity and silence, and the lamp performed its duty as honestly as ever. But at the last stroke of midnight there was the same creaking sound. But as it came from a spot within

four steps of the confessional, the curé was able to fix his eyes at once upon that spot. The noise proceeded from the knight's tomb.

The carved flagstone which covered the sepulchre slowly rose, and through the aperture the curé saw a spider as large as a spaniel come forth, with hair six inches and claws an ell long; and the creature began at once, without hesitation, without looking about for a road which was evidently familiar to him, to climb the pillar, run along the cornice, slide down the cord, and finally drink the oil in the lamp, which went out as usual.

But the curé then had recourse to his dark lantern, and directed its rays upon the knight's tomb.

He thereupon perceived that the stone was held up by a toad as large as a porpoise, which raised it by inflating its body, and thus gave egress to the spider, which incontinently pumped out the oil, and then returned to divide with his companion.

Both had been living thus for centuries in that tomb, where they would in all probability be living to this day, had not an accident revealed to the curé the presence of a thief of some sort in his church.

The next day the curé summoned assistance. They raised the stone and put to death the insect and the reptile, whose bodies were suspended from the ceiling and bore witness to the extraordinary event.

Furthermore, the peasant who told Nodier the story was one of those who were called upon by the curé to fight those two fellow-occupants of the old knight's tomb, and as he had devoted his attention especially to the toad, a drop of the filthy creature's blood had dropped on his eye and had very nearly made him as blind as Tobias.

He had escaped with the loss of but one eye.

So far as Nodier was concerned, the stories of toads did not stop there. There was in the longevity of those creatures something that charmed Nodier's imagination. And so all the tales of toads a hundred or a thousand years old he had at his tongue's end. All the toads discovered in rocks or in tree-trunks, — from the one found in 1756 by the sculptor Leprince, at Eretteville, in a rock in which he was encased, to the one shut up in a plaster box by Hérifsant in 1771, and found very much alive in 1774 when the box was opened, were well known to him. When any one asked Nodier what the wretched prisoners lived on, he would reply that they swallowed their skins. He had made a close study of a fop of a toad who had a new skin six times in one winter, and swallowed the old one every time. As for those found in the rocks that have existed since the beginning of the world, as, for instance, the one found in the quarry of Bourswick in Gothland, the state of absolute inaction in which they had necessarily lived, the suspension of life in a temperature which made dissolution impossible, and which did not require any loss of tissue to be made up, the moisture which kept alive the moisture in the animal's body and prevented its destruction by desiccation, — those things seemed to Nodier sufficient to justify a conviction in which there was as much faith as science.

Moreover Nodier had, as we have said, a certain natural humility, a certain tendency to belittle himself, which drew him toward the small and the humble. Nodier the bibliophile discovered unknown treasures in the way of books, which he rescued from the tomb of libraries. So Nodier the philanthropist found among the living, unknown poets, whom he brought to light

and led to celebrity. Injustice of every sort, oppression of every sort was revolting to him, and in his view mankind oppressed the toad, was unjust to him, and did not know or did not choose to know the toad's virtues. The toad was a faithful friend. Nodier had proved that fact by the story of the partnership of the toad and the spider, and, if called upon to do so, he would prove it twice over by telling another anecdote of a toad and a lizard no less interesting than the first. The toad was therefore not only a good friend, but a good father and a good husband. By delivering his wife himself, the toad gave to husbands the first lessons in conjugal love. By protecting the eggs of his family with his hind paws, and by carrying them on his back, the toad gave to heads of families the first lesson in paternity. As for the slaver which the toad exudes, or even squirts sometimes when he is tormented, Nodier declared that it was the most harmless substance in the world, and he preferred it to the saliva of many critics of his acquaintance.

It was not that those critics were not received at his house like other people, and received courteously too, but they gradually ceased to come of their own accord. They did not feel at ease in the atmosphere of kindliness which was the natural atmosphere of the Arsenal, and through which raillery flashed harmlessly, like the glow-worm on a lovely night at Nice or Florence; that is to say, it cast a gleam and vanished.

Conversing thus, we would draw near the end of a delightful dinner, during which all kinds of accidents, except upsetting the salt and placing a loaf of bread upside down, were taken philosophically. Coffee was served at the table. Nodier was at heart a sybarite. He had a thorough appreciation of that sentiment of the

consummate sensualist, which brooks no moving about, no change of place between the dessert and the beverage that crowns the dessert. During that moment of pure Asiatic enjoyment, Madame Nodier would leave her seat to go and light the salon. As I did not take coffee, I frequently accompanied her. My long body was of great use to her in lighting the chandelier without standing on a chair.

The salon was not lighted until then, for, before dinner and on ordinary days, we were always received in Madame Nodier's bedroom. The candles lighted up walls painted white, with Louis XV. mouldings, and furniture of a very modest description, consisting of a dozen arm-chairs and a couch covered with red cashmere, window-curtains of the same color, a bust of Hugo, a statue of Henri IV., a portrait of Nodier, and an Alpine landscape by Regnier.

The guests entered the salon five minutes after it was lighted, Nodier last, leaning on Dauzat's arm, or on Bixio's or Francis Wey's or mine, always puffing and complaining as if he could hardly breathe. Then he would stretch himself out in a great arm-chair on the right-hand side of the hearth, his legs stretched out in front of him and his arms hanging, or else he would stand in front of the mantelpiece with his calves to the fire and his back to the mirror. If he stretched himself out in the arm-chair there was no hope. Nodier, absorbed by the momentary beatitude that coffee affords, proposed to play the egotist and to follow in silence the dream of his imagination; but if he leaned against the mantel, that was another matter: that meant that he was going to talk. Thereupon everybody would hold his peace and listen to one of the fascinating stories of his youth which seemed like a novel of Longus or an

idyl of Theocritus; or to some melancholy drama of the Revolution, of which a battlefield in La Vendée or Place de la Révolution was always the stage; or to some mysterious conspiracy of Cadoudal or Oudet, Staps or Lahorie. They who came in while he was talking would not speak, but salute with a wave of the hand, and sit down or lean against the wall. At last the story would come to an end, as everything must. We never applauded, any more than we would applaud the murmuring of a brook or the song of a bird; but when the murmuring had died away, when the song had ceased, we listened still. Thereupon Marie, without speaking, would go to the piano, and suddenly a brilliant volley of notes would rush through the air like the prelude to a display of fireworks. At that signal the card-players, relegated to the corners of the room, would take their places at the tables and begin to play.

For a long time Nodier would play nothing but *bataille*. It was his favorite game, and he claimed to be very strong at it. At last he made a concession to the age and played écarté.

After the prelude Marie would sing some of Hugo's words or Lamartine's or mine, set to music by herself; and suddenly, in the midst of those fascinating melodies, which were always too short, we would hear the refrain of a contra-dance. Every gentleman would select his partner and a ball would begin.

A charming ball, for which Marie furnished all the music, tossing a word, amid the rapid trills executed by her fingers on the keys, to those who approached her in every "lady's chain," every "right and left," every "chassé across." From that moment Nodier vanished, and was completely forgotten. For he was not one of those high-handed, imperious masters whose presence

you can feel, and whose approach you divine. He was the host of the days of antiquity, who effaces himself to make room for his guest, and who is content to be courteous, weak, and almost feminine.

Nodier, after disappearing for a moment or two, soon disappeared altogether. He went to bed, or rather he was put to bed early. Madame Nodier was intrusted with that duty. In winter she left the salon first, and sometimes, when there were no hot coals in the kitchen, we would see a warming-pan pass the door and return, filled, to the bedroom. Nodier followed the warming-pan, and that was the last of him.

Ten minutes later Madame Nodier would return to the salon. Nodier was safely in bed, and fell asleep to his daughter's melodies and the stamping and laughter of the dancers.

One day we found Nodier even more humble than usual. He was embarrassed, shamefaced. We asked him anxiously what the matter was.

Nodier had been chosen an Academician.

He apologized very humbly to Hugo and me.

But it was no fault of his. The Academy had chosen him when he least expected it.

The fact was that Nodier, who knew as much as all the academicians together, had demolished the Academy Dictionary stone by stone. He used to say that the Immortal who was assigned to write the article *crab* showed him one day what he had written, and asked him what he thought of it.

The article was in these words: —

"*Crab*, a small red fish, which walks backward."

"There 's only one mistake in your definition," Nodier replied. "The crab is n't a fish, it is n't red, and it does n't walk backward. The rest is perfect."

I forgot to say that in due time Marie Nodier married, became Madame Ménessier; but her marriage made absolutely no change in the life at the Arsenal. Jules was the friend of all of us. We had long been accustomed to see him come to the house. He lived there now instead of coming there. That was all the difference.

I am wrong; a great sacrifice had been consummated. Nodier sold his library. Nodier loved his books, but he adored Marie.

I must say further that no one could make the reputation of a book as Nodier could. If he wished to sell a book or make a sale for it, he would write an article in praise of it. With what he discovered in it, he would make a unique copy. I remember the history of a volume entitled the "Zombi du Grand Pérou," which Nodier claimed was printed in the colonies, and the whole edition of which he destroyed on his own responsibility. The book was worth five francs, and he made it worth three hundred.

Four times Nodier sold his books, but he always kept a certain number, a precious nucleus, around which, in two or three years, his library would be reconstructed.

One day all our delightful meetings were interrupted. Nodier had been more ailing, more complaining for a month or two; but we had all become so accustomed to hear him complain that we paid no great attention to his complaints. With a disposition like Nodier's it is very hard to distinguish between real and imaginary suffering. This time, however, he was visibly growing weaker. No more sauntering along the quays, no more promenades on the boulevards, only a slow walk in the direction of Saint-Mandé when a last ray of the autumn sun forced its way through the gray clouds.

The end of the walk was a wretched wine-shop where

Nodier used to regale himself with brown bread in his days of health. He was, as a general rule, accompanied by his whole family, except Jules, who was detained at his office. Madame Nodier, Marie, and the two children, Charles and Georgette, were not willing to leave the husband, father, and grandfather. They felt that they had only a little time to be with him, and they made the most of it.

Up to the last moment Nodier insisted that Sunday should be observed as usual; but at last it was evident that the sick man could no longer endure the noise and movement in the salon. One day Marie sadly informed us that, on the following Sunday, the Arsenal would be closed; but she added, in an undertone, to the most intimate friends, —

"Come, and we will talk."

At last Nodier took to his bed, never to leave it again.

I went to see him.

"Ah! my dear Dumas," he said, holding out his arms to me the moment he caught sight of me, "in the days when I was in good health, you had only a friend in me. Since I have been sick, you have in me a grateful debtor. I cannot work any more, but I can still read, and I am reading you, as you see; and when I am tired I call my daughter and she reads you."

As he spoke he pointed to some of my books scattered over his bed and the table.

It was a moment of genuine pride. Nodier, isolated from the world and unable to work, Nodier, that boundless mind, who knew everything, read me and found entertainment in reading me!

I took his hands. I would have liked to kiss them, I was so grateful.

As it happened, I had read something of his the night

before, a small volume which had appeared in two numbers of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." It was "Inès de la Sierra."

I was lost in admiration. That novel, one of Charles' last works, was so fresh, so highly colored, that one would have said that it was a work written in his younger days, which he had found and sent into the world on the other slope of his life.

The story of Inès was a story of ghosts and phantoms and spectres; but, though it was entirely fanciful in the first part, it ceased to be so in the second. The end explained the beginning. Oh! I complained bitterly to Nodier of that explanation.

"True," he said, "I was wrong; but I have another. I won't spoil this one, never fear."

"I am glad to hear it, and when are you going to work on it?"

Nodier took my hand.

"This one I shall not spoil," he said, "because I shall not write it."

"Who will write it?"

"You."

"I, my dear Charles? Why, I don't know it.

"I will tell it to you. I have been keeping it for myself, or rather for you."

"My dear Charles, you shall tell it to me, but you must write it and print it yourself."

Nodier shook his head.

"I am going to tell it to you," he said. "If I recover, you can give it back to me."

"Wait till my next visit; we have time enough."

"My friend, I will say to you what I once said to a creditor when I gave him something on account: 'Take it when you can get it.'"

And he began.

Never did Nodier tell a story so entertainingly.

Oh! if I had had pen and paper, if I could have written as rapidly as he talked!

It was a long story, and I remained to dinner.

After dinner Nodier dozed. I left the Arsenal without seeing him again. That was the last time I ever saw him alive.

Nodier, whom everybody believed to be so ready to complain of trifles, had on the contrary concealed his suffering from his family until the very last. When he disclosed the wound, it was seen to be mortal.

Nodier was not only a Christian, but a stanch and true Catholic. He had made Marie promise to send a priest to him when the time arrived. The time arrived and Marie sent for the curé of Saint-Paul's.

Nodier confessed. Poor Nodier! There may have been many sins in his life, but there certainly was not one fault.

When the confession was finished the whole family entered the room.

Nodier was in a dark alcove, from which he held out his arms over his wife and daughter and grandchildren.

Behind the family were the servants.

Behind the servants the library; that is to say, those friends who never change, — books.

The curé read the prayers aloud, and Nodier made the responses aloud, like one familiar with the Christian liturgy. Then, when the prayers were at an end, he kissed them all, talked to them reassuringly about his condition, and said that he felt that he should live a day or two longer, especially if he was allowed to sleep for a few hours.

They left him alone, and he slept five hours.

On the evening of January 26th, the eve of his death, the fever increased, and caused some slight delirium. About midnight he could not recognize anybody, and his lips uttered incoherent words, among which could be distinguished the names of Tacitus and Fénélon.

About two o'clock death began to knock at the door. Nodier had a violent convulsion, and his daughter leaned over his pillow and held to his lips a cup filled with a quieting draught. He opened his eyes, looked at Marie, and recognized her by her tears. Then he took the cup from her hands and eagerly drank the liquid it contained.

"Did it taste good?" Marie asked him.

"Oh, yes! my child, like everything that comes from you."

Poor Marie let her head fall on the pillow, covering the dying man's moist forehead with her hair.

"Oh! if you would stay so," muttered Nodier, "I should never die."[1]

Death was still knocking.

The extremities began to grow cold; but as life was driven upward more and more, it concentrated in Nodier's brain, and made his mind clearer than it had ever been.

He blessed his wife and children, and then asked what day of the month it was.

"The 27th of January," said Madame Nodier.

"You won't forget that date, will you, my dears?" said he.

Then he turned to the window.

[1] Francis Wey has published a most interesting account of Nodier's last moments; but it was written for the intimate friends alone, and but twenty-five copies were printed.

"I would like to see the daylight once more," he said with a sigh.

He fell into a doze.

Then his breath became intermittent.

At last, just as the first ray of light shone in at the window, he opened his eyes, looked an adieu, and expired.

With Nodier everything died at the Arsenal, — joy, life, and light. We were all afflicted alike. Each one lost a part of himself in losing Nodier. For my own part, I do not just know how to express it, but there has been something dead within me since Nodier died.

That something lives only when I speak of Nodier.

That is why I speak of him so often.

The story you are about to read is the story Nodier told to me.

II.

THE HOFFMANN FAMILY.

Among the enchanting cities that are scattered along the banks of the Rhine like the beads of a rosary of which the river is the thread, we must include Mannheim, the second capital of the grand duchy of Baden and the second residence of the grand duke.

To-day, when the steamers which ascend and descend the Rhine stop at Mannheim, when a railroad runs to Mannheim, when Mannheim, with disheveled hair and blood-stained robe, has hoisted the standard of rebellion against her grand duke, amid the roar of musketry, I know not what Mannheim is; but I will tell you what it was at the period when this story begins, about fifty-six years ago.

It was the German city *par excellence*, at once tranquil and torn by political strife, a little melancholy, or rather a little dreamy; it was the city of Auguste Lafontaine's novels and of the poems of Gœthe, Henrietta Belmann, and Werther.

Indeed one needed but to cast a glance at Mannheim to make up one's mind at once, at sight of its squarely aligned houses, its division into four quarters, its fine, broad streets in which the grass grew, the shady promenade, between a double row of acacias, which runs through the city from end to end, to make up one's mind, I say, how smooth-flowing and tranquil life would be in such a paradise, were it not that sentimental or political passions sometimes placed a pistol in the hand of Werther or a dagger in the hand of Karl Ludwig Sand.

There is one square which has an entirely unique aspect: it is that on which the church and the theatre stand side by side.

Church and theatre were built at the same time, probably by the same architect; probably, too, about the middle of the last century, when the whims of a favorite had so great an influence upon art that one whole branch of art took her name, from the church to the little house of the kept mistress, from the bronze statue ten cubits high to the little figure in Saxony porcelain.

The church and theatre of Mannheim are in the Pompadour style.

The church has two exterior recesses: in one of them is a Minerva, in the other a Hebe.

The door of the theatre is surmounted by two sphinxes, representing Comedy and Tragedy.

One of the two sphinxes has a mask under his paw, the other a dagger. Both have their hair combed straight, with powdered *chignon*, which adds wonderfully to their Egyptian character.

The whole square, crooked houses, trimmed trees, festooned walls, have the same general character and form a most attractive whole.

A room on the first floor of a house whose windows look diagonally toward the doorway of the Jesuit church is the place to which we propose to conduct our readers, simply reminding them that we are taking them back more than half a century, and that the time is the year of grace, or disgrace, 1793, and the day, Sunday, the 10th of May. Everything is in bloom: the algæ on the bank of the river, the marguerites in the fields, the hawthorn in the hedges, the roses in the gardens, love in the heart.

Now let us add this: that one of the hearts which

were beating most violently in the whole city of Mannheim and its neighborhood was that of the young man who occupied the little room we have mentioned, whose windows looked diagonally toward the doorway of the Jesuit church.

Room and young man both deserve a particular description.

The room was most assuredly the habitation of a mind that was both whimsical and picturesque, for it had the appearance of a studio, a music shop, and a study.

There were a palette, brushes, and an easel, and on the easel an unfinished sketch.

There were a guitar, a viola, and a piano, and on the piano an open sonata.

There were pen, ink, and paper, and on the paper was scrawled the beginning of a ballad.

And along the walls there were bows and arrows, slings of the fifteenth century, engravings of the sixteenth, musical instruments of the seventeenth, chests of all epochs, drinking vessels of all shapes, jugs of all kinds, with glass necklaces, feather fans, stuffed snakes, dried flowers, a whole world in fact; but a world not worth twenty-five thalers in hard cash.

Was the occupant of the room a painter, a musician, or a poet? We do not know.

But he certainly was a smoker; for among all his collections, the most complete, the most prominent, occupying the place of honor and spread out in the sunlight above an old couch, was a collection of pipes.

But whatever he may have been, poet, musician, painter, or smoker, for the moment he was neither smoking, painting, writing scores, nor writing poetry.

No, he was looking.

He was standing like a statue against the wall, holding

his breath and looking; he was looking through his open window, having made a rampart of the curtain, in order to see without being seen; he was looking as one looks when the eyes are only the spectacles of the heart.

What was he looking at?

A spot entirely deserted at the moment, the doorway of the Jesuit church.

To be sure the doorway was deserted simply because the church was full.

Now let us say a word as to the personal appearance of the young man who occupied that room, who was looking out from behind the curtain, and whose heart beat so as he looked.

He was a young man of eighteen years at most, short and thin and wild of aspect. His long black hair fell from his forehead to below his eyes, which it veiled when he did not push it aside with his hand, and through the veil thus formed by his hair his eyes gleamed wildly, like the eyes of a man whose mental faculties are not likely always to remain in a state of perfect equilibrium.

This young man was neither poet, painter, nor musician; he was a compound of all three. He was painting, music, and poetry united; he was an eccentric, curious whole, good and bad, brave and timid, active and indolent. The young man, in a word, was Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann.

He was born on a rough night in the winter of 1776, while the wind was blowing, the snow falling, and everybody who was not rich suffering. He was born at Königsberg, in the heart of Old Prussia; born so feeble and frail and puny, that his diminutive stature led every one to believe that it was much more important to order a grave dug for him than to buy a cradle. He was born in the same year in which Schiller, writing his drama of the

"Brigands," signed himself SCHILLER, the *slave of Klopstock;* born of one of the old middle-class families, such as we had in France in the days of the Fronde, such as there still are in Germany, but such as will soon cease to exist anywhere in the world; born of a mother who was of a sickly constitution, but devoutly resigned to her lot, to which fact his whole unhealthy person owed its aspect of attractive melancholy; born of a father of stern mind and bearing, who was criminal councillor and commissioner of justice in the superior provincial tribunal. Beside the father and mother there were uncles who were judges, bailiffs, burgomasters, and aunts still young and fair and coquettish; and all, aunts and uncles alike, musicians, artists, full of energy and sprightliness. Hoffmann said that he had seen them. He remembered them when he was a child of six and eight and ten years, giving strange concerts, in which each one played on one of the old instruments of which no one knows even the names to-day: tympana, rebecs, zithers, citherns, *violes d'amour,* and *violes de gamba.* To be sure, no one except Hoffmann had ever seen these musical uncles and aunts, all of whom withdrew, one after another, like spectres, extinguishing, as they withdrew, the lights that burned in their music-stands.

But of all those uncles there remained one; of all those aunts there remained one.

That aunt was one of Hoffmann's most delightful memories.

In the house in which Hoffmann had passed his youth, there lived a sister of his mother, a young woman whose sweet glances went to the very bottom of the soul; a gentle, intellectual young woman, of remarkably keen insight, who discerned in the child whom every one took for a fool, a lunatic, or a maniac, signs of a powerful

mind; who alone pleaded for him,— with his mother, be it understood; who predicted for him genius and renown, a prediction that more than once brought tears to the eyes of Hoffmann's mother, for she knew that disaster is the inseparable companion of genius and renown.

That aunt was Aunt Sophia. She was a musician like the whole family, and played the lute. When Hoffmann awoke in his cradle, he awoke amid billows of delicious melody; when he opened his eyes, he saw the young woman's graceful form wedded to her instrument. She was generally clad in a sea-green dress with red ribbons; she was generally accompanied by an old musician with crooked legs and a white wig, who played a bass-viol taller than himself, to which he clung, running up and down like a lizard on a gourd. From that torrent of harmony, falling like a cascade of pearls from the fair Euterpe's fingers, Hoffmann had imbibed the enchanted potion that had made him a musician himself.

So it happened that Aunt Sophia was, as we have said, one of Hoffmann's most delightful memories.

It was not so with his uncle.

The death of Hoffmann's father and his mother's ill-health had left him in that uncle's hands.

He was a man as methodical as Hoffmann was unmethodical, as severely commonplace as Hoffmann was strange and eccentric, and his passion for order and regularity was constantly exerted over his nephew, but always as fruitlessly as the Emperor Charles the Fifth's will was exerted over his clocks; the uncle labored in vain, the clock struck according to his nephew's whim and not according to his own.

In reality, despite his methodical habits and his regularity, this uncle of Hoffmann's was no bitter enemy of art and the imagination. He would even tolerate music,

poetry, and painting; but he declared that no man of common sense would ever resort to such enervating pursuits, except to facilitate digestion, immediately after dinner. He arranged Hoffmann's life on this theory: so many hours for sleep, so many hours for his legal studies, so many hours for meals; so many minutes for painting, so many minutes for music, so many minutes for poetry.

Hoffmann would have liked to reverse the programme and say: so many minutes for study for the bar, and so many hours for poetry, painting, and music; but Hoffmann was not his own master. The result was that he had conceived a horror of the bar and of his uncle, and that one fine day he ran away from Königsberg with a few thalers in his pocket, and found his way to Heidelberg, where he halted for a few moments, but where he could not make up his mind to remain because of the wretched music at the theatre.

So he had gone from Heidelberg to Mannheim, whose theatre — near which he had, as we have seen, taken up his quarters — was reputed to rival France and Italy in lyric productions. We say France and Italy, because it must not be forgotten that it was only five or six years prior to the time of which we are writing that the great struggle took place between Gluck and Piccini.

Hoffmann, therefore, was at Mannheim, where he had lodgings near the theatre, and where he was living on the proceeds of his painting, his music, and his poetry, added to a few gold fredericks which his good mother sent him from time to time, at the moment when, assuming the privilege of the Lame Devil, we raise the ceiling of his room and exhibit him to our readers, standing like a statue against the wall behind his curtain, breathing hard, with his eyes fixed on the doorway of the Jesuit church.

III.

A LOVER AND A MADMAN.

JUST at the moment when a few persons who came out of the Jesuit Church, although the mass was hardly half finished, made Hoffmann more watchful than ever, some one knocked at his door. The young man shook his head, and stamped his foot impatiently, but did not reply.

The knock was repeated.

Hoffmann darted a fierce glance at the intruder through the door.

Again the knocking was repeated.

That time the young man stood absolutely motionless. He had evidently determined not to open the door.

But instead of persisting in knocking, the visitor contented himself by calling one of Hoffman's Christian names.

"Theodor," he said.

"Ah! it is you, Zacharias Werner," murmured the young man.

"Yes, it is I. Do you wish to be alone?"

"No, wait." And Hoffmann went and opened the door.

A tall young man, pale and thin and fair, and somewhat wild of aspect, entered the room. He was perhaps three or four years older than Hoffmann. As soon as the door opened, he put his hand on Hoffmann's shoulder and his lips to his forehead as an elder brother might have done.

He was, in fact, a true brother to Hoffmann. Born in the same house that he was, Zacharias Werner, the future author of "Martin Luther," "Attila," "The 24th of February," and the "Cross of the Baltic," had grown to manhood under the twofold protection of his own mother and Hoffmann's.

The two women, both of whom were subject to a nervous affection which ended in madness, had transmitted that malady to their children. Being weakened by the transmission, it became in Hoffmann's case capriciousness of the imagination, and in Werner's a melancholy temperament. The mother of the latter believed that, like the Blessed Virgin, she had a divine mission. Her child, her Zacharias, was to be the new Christ, the future Siloe promised by the Scriptures. While he slept she wove wreaths of bluebells which she placed on his brow. She knelt beside him, singing, in her sweet melodious voice, Luther's noblest chants, hoping, at every verse, to see the wreath of bluebells change to a halo.

The two children were brought up together. The fact that Zacharias was at Heidelberg, where he was studying, was Hoffmann's principal reason for flying from his uncle's, and Zacharias, repaying one good turn by another, had left Heidelberg and joined Hoffmann at Mannheim, when he went thither in quest of better music than he found at Heidelberg.

But when they were together at Mannheim, far removed from the influence of that sweet-natured mother, the young men were seized with an eager longing for travel, that indispensable complement to the education of the German student, and had determined to visit Paris. Werner, because of the strange spectacle that the capital of France must present in the throes of

the Reign of Terror, which was at its height; Hoffmann, in order to compare French and Italian music, and especially to study the resources of the French opera in the matter of stage setting and scenery, for he had at that time the idea that he cherished throughout his life of becoming manager of a theatre.

Werner, a libertine by temperament, although religious by education, proposed at the same time to take advantage for his own pleasure of the strange freedom in the matter of morals at which the French people had arrived in 1793, and which one of his friends, recently returned from Paris, had described to him in such seductive colors, that the pleasure-loving student's head had been turned thereby.

Hoffmann intended to see the museums of which he had heard so many marvellous tales, and, being still uncertain as to his own style, to compare Italian painting with German painting.

Whatever the secret motives may have been that impelled the friends to visit France, the longing was equal in both cases.

To gratify that longing they lacked but one thing, — money. But, by a strange coincidence, chance decreed that Zacharias and Hoffmann had each received five gold fredericks from his mother on the same day.

Ten gold fredericks were equal to almost two hundred francs, and that was a very pretty little sum for two students, who spent but five thalers a month for board, lodging, and fuel. But that sum was entirely insufficient for the needs of the famous journey they had planned.

An idea had occurred to the two young men, and, as it had occurred to them both at once, they had taken it as an inspiration from heaven.

It was to go to a gambling-house and risk each his five gold fredericks.

With no more than the ten fredericks the journey was impossible. By risking them they might win enough to make the tour of the world.

It was no sooner said than done. The season for taking the waters was drawing near, and the gambling-houses had been open since the first of May. Werner and Hoffmann betook themselves to one of them.

Werner tried his luck first and lost his five fredericks in five minutes. It was Hoffmann's turn.

Hoffmann tremblingly risked his first gold frederick and won.

Encouraged by that beginning he doubled his stake. He had struck a vein of good luck. He won four times out of five, and he was one of those who have confidence in luck. Instead of hesitating he went boldly on, doubling and doubling. It was as if some supernatural power were assisting him. Without definite plan, without any sort of calculation, he staked his gold upon a card, and his gold doubled, trebled, quadrupled. Zacharias, trembling more violently than a fever patient, and paler than a ghost, murmured, "Enough, Theodor, enough;" but the gambler laughed at his childish timidity. Gold followed gold and gold begat gold. At last the clock struck two in the morning, the hour for closing had arrived, and the game ceased. The two young men loaded themselves down with gold, without stopping to count it. Zacharias, who could not believe that that wealth was all his, went out first. Hoffmann was about to follow him, when an old officer, who had not taken his eyes off him all the time he had been playing, stopped him as he was going out of the door.

"Young man," he said, laying his hand on Hoffmann's and gazing earnestly at him, "if you go on at this rate you will break the bank, I agree; but when the bank is broken, you will be only the surer prey for the devil."

He disappeared without waiting for Hoffmann to reply. Hoffmann also went out, but he was no longer the same man. The old soldier's prophecy had chilled him like an ice-cold bath, and the gold with which his pockets were filled weighed heavily upon him. It seemed to him as if he were carrying his burden of evil deeds.

Werner was waiting for him in high glee. They returned together to Hoffmann's lodging, one laughing and dancing and singing; the other lost in thought, almost dejected.

Both, however, decided to start for France the next day.

They embraced and parted.

Hoffmann, when he was alone, counted his gold.

He had five thousand thalers, twenty-three or twenty-four thousand francs.

He reflected a long while, and at last seemed to make up his mind to a difficult step.

While he was reflecting, by the light of a copper lamp, his face was pale and the perspiration was streaming from his brow.

At the slightest sound in the room, though it were as indistinguishable as the fluttering of a fly's wing, he started, turned his head and looked all around in alarm.

The officer's prediction returned to his mind. He murmured under his breath certain lines of "Faust," and he fancied that he could see on the threshold the gnawing rat, in the corner of his room the black spaniel.

At last his decision was made.

He put aside a thousand thalers which he considered amply sufficient for his journey, and tied the other four thousand thalers in a bundle. Then he fastened a card upon the bundle with wax, and wrote on the card, —

"To the Herr Burgomaster of Königsberg, to be distributed among the poorest families of the town."

Then, content with the victory he had won over himself, comforted by what he had done, he undressed, went to bed, and slept without waking until seven o'clock in the morning.

At seven o'clock he awoke, and his first glance was for his thousand visible thalers and the sealed package containing the other four thousand. He thought that he had been dreaming.

The sight of the gold assured him of the reality of what had happened the night before.

But the thing that was most real to Hoffmann, although there was no material object to remind him of it, was the old officer's prediction.

And so, without the slightest regret, he dressed as usual; and, taking his four thousand thalers under his arm, he carried them himself to the office of the Königsberg diligence, having first taken the precaution to deposit the thousand thalers in his drawer.

Then, as it had been agreed, as the reader will remember, that the two friends should start for France that evening, Hoffmann began to make his preparations for the journey.

As he went and came, now brushing a coat, now folding a shirt, now sorting out his handkerchiefs, Hoffmann cast his eyes into the street, and remained standing in the attitude he had assumed at that instant.

A young girl of sixteen or seventeen years, a fascinating creature, certainly a stranger in Mannheim, as Hoffmann did not know her by sight, was coming from the other end of the street toward the church.

Hoffmann had never seen her like in all his dreams as poet, painter, or musician.

She not only surpassed all that he had ever seen, but all that he hoped to see.

And yet he was so far away that he could see only a ravishing *ensemble*. The details eluded him.

The girl was attended by an old serving-woman. They slowly ascended the church steps together and disappeared under the doorway.

Hoffman left his trunk half packed, a wine-colored coat half brushed, his frogged coat half folded, and remained motionless behind his curtain.

That is where we found him, waiting for her whom he had seen go in to come out.

He dreaded but one thing, — that she was an angel, and that, instead of coming out by the door, she would fly out through the window on her way back to heaven.

It was in that situation that we caught him, and that his friend Zacharias caught him after us.

The new-comer, as we have said, placed his hand on his friend's shoulder, and his lips on his brow simultaneously.

Then he heaved a deep sigh.

Although Zacharias Werner was always pale, he was paler than usual at that moment.

"What 's the matter?" Hoffmann asked with unfeigned anxiety.

"O my friend!" cried Werner. "I am a brigand! I am a villain! I deserve death! Cleave my head with

an axe, pierce my heart with an arrow. I am no longer worthy to look upon the light of heaven."

"Nonsense!" said Hoffmann, with the placidly absent-minded air of the happy man, "what has happened to you, my dear friend?"

"What has happened? You asked me what has happened, didn't you? Well, my friend, the devil tempted me!"

"What do you mean?"

"That when I saw all my gold this morning, there was so much of it that it seemed to me as if I must have dreamed about it."

"Dreamed about it?"

"There was a table all covered with it," Werner continued. "Well, when I saw it, a veritable fortune, a thousand gold fredericks, my friend, — when I saw it all, when I saw every piece gleaming like the sun, a frenzy seized me. I could not resist. I took a third of my money and went to the gambling-house."

"And you lost?"

"To my last kreutzer."

"What 's the odds? It 's a small matter, as you have two-thirds left."

"Ah, yes! two-thirds! I went back and got the second third and — "

"And you lost it like the first?"

"More quickly, my friend, more quickly."

"And then you went back and got the last third?"

"I did n't go back, I flew. I took the fifteen hundred francs that were left and put them on the red."

"In that case," said Hoffmann, "black came up, I presume?"

"Ah! my friend, black, the horrible black, without hesitation, without remorse, as if it did not, by coming

up, snatch away my last hope! Gone, my friend, gone!"

"And you regret the loss of the thousand fredericks solely on account of our journey?"

"For no other reason. Oh! if I had only put aside enough to take me to Paris — five hundred thalers!"

"Then you would be consoled for the loss of the rest?"

"Instantly."

"Ah, well! set your mind at rest at once, my dear Zacharias," said Hoffmann, leading him to his desk. "There are your five hundred thalers, — go."

"What! you bid me go?" cried Werner. "What about yourself?"

"Oh! I do not intend to go."

"You don't intend to go?"

"No, not at this moment, at all events."

"But why not? What is your reason? What prevents your going? What keeps you at Mannheim?"

Hoffmann hastily drew his friend to the window. The mass was at an end, and people were beginning to leave the church.

"There, look, look!" he said, pointing out somebody to Werner with his finger.

The unknown girl appeared at that moment in the doorway and slowly descended the church steps, her prayer-book against her breast, her eyes cast down, as modest and pensive as Goethe's Gretchen.

"Do you see?" murmured Hoffmann. "Do you see?"

"Certainly I see."

"Well, what do you say?"

"I say that there 's no woman for whom it is worth sacrificing a trip to Paris, though she were the fair

Antonia, daughter of old Gottlieb Murr, the new leader of the orchestra at the Mannheim theatre."

"You know her then?"

"Certainly."

"And you know her father?"

"He led the orchestra at the Frankfort theatre."

"Can you give me a letter to him?"

"Surely."

"Sit you down there, Zacharias, and write."

Zacharias sat down at the table and wrote.

On the eve of his departure for France he commended his young friend Theodor Hoffmann to his old friend Gottlieb Murr.

Hoffmann hardly gave Zacharias time to finish his letter. As soon as he had signed his name, he took it, and, after embracing his friend, rushed from the room.

"Never mind," Zacharias Werner called after him. "You will see that the woman does n't live, however pretty she may be, who can make you forget Paris."

Hoffmann heard his friend's words, but did not think best to turn and respond to them even by a gesture of assent or dissent.

Zacharias Werner put his five hundred thalers in his pocket, and, in order to avoid any further temptation by the demon of play, ran as fast toward the stage-office as Hoffmann ran toward the house of the old leader of the orchestra.

Hoffmann knocked at Gottlieb Murr's door at the same moment that Werner entered the Strasburg diligence.

IV.

MASTER GOTTLIEB MURR.

The leader of the orchestra in person opened the door to Hoffmann.

Hoffmann had never seen Master Gottlieb, and yet he recognized him. Grotesque as he was in appearance, he could be nothing but an artist, and a great artist at that.

He was a little old man of some fifty-five to sixty years, with one crooked leg which resembled a cork-screw, and yet he did not limp overmuch. As he walked, or rather hopped, — his hop greatly resembled a wagtail's, — as he hopped along in front of the persons he admitted to his house, he would suddenly stop, make a pirouette on his crooked leg, as if he were screwing a gimlet into the floor, and then go forward again.

Hoffmann, as he followed him, examined him closely and engraved upon his mind one of those marvellous, weird portraits of which he has given us such a complete gallery in his works.

The old man's face was enthusiastic, shrewd, and intellectual at once, covered with parchment-like skin, spotted red and black like a page of plain-song. In the middle of that curious surface gleamed two bright eyes, whose keen glance one could the better appreciate because the spectacles that he wore and never laid aside, even in his sleep, were invariably on top of his head or

at the end of his nose. It was only when he was playing on the violin, with head erect and looking off into the distance, that he really used what seemed to be rather a luxury than a necessity to him.

His head was bald and always protected by a black cap, which had become an inherent part of his person. Day and night Master Gottlieb received his visitors in his cap. And when he went out he simply wore a small Jean-Jacques wig over it; so that the cap was confined between the wig and his skull. It goes without saying that Master Gottlieb never troubled himself in the least about the bit of velvet that protruded from under his false hair, which being more closely connected with the hat than with the head, accompanied the hat in its aerial excursions whenever Master Gottlieb saluted an acquaintance.

Hoffmann looked about, but saw nobody.

So he followed Master Gottlieb, who, as we have said, walked in front of him, wherever he chose to lead.

Master Gottlieb paused in a large study filled with scores piled one upon another, and loose sheets of music. Upon a table were ten or twelve boxes, more or less ornate, and all of the shape which no musician ever mistakes, the shape of a violin case.

At that moment Master Gottlieb was engaged in arranging Cimarosa's "Matrimonio Segreto" for the Mannheim theatre, where he proposed to try some Italian music as an experiment.

A bow was thrust in his belt, like Harlequin's club, or, more properly speaking, was held in place by the buttoned pocket of his breeches. A pen was perched proudly behind his ear, and his fingers were smeared with ink.

With his ink-smeared fingers he took the letter Hoffmann handed him, and said, as he glanced at the address and recognized the handwriting, —

"Ah! Zacharias Werner, a poet, yes, a poet, but a gambler." Then he added, as if the virtue atoned somewhat for the vice, "A gambler, a gambler, but a poet."

He unsealed the letter.

"Gone, has he not?" he said. "Gone!"

"He is starting at this moment."

"God guide his steps!" said Gottlieb, raising his eyes to heaven as if to commend his friend to God. "But he has done well to go. Travelling forms youth, and, if I had not travelled, I should not know the immortal Paesiello, the divine Cimarosa."

"But you would know their works just as well, Master Gottlieb," said Hoffmann.

"Yes, their works, of course; but what does it amount to, to know the work without knowing the artist? It is like knowing the soul without the body. The work is the ghost, the apparition. The work is what remains of us after our death. But the body, you see, is what has lived. You will never thoroughly comprehend a man's work unless you have known the man himself."

Hoffmann nodded his head.

"It is true," he said. "I never fully appreciated Mozart until I had seen him."

"Yes, yes," said Gottlieb. "Mozart has some good points; but why has he those good points? Because he travelled in Italy. German music, young man, is the music of men; but mark this, Italian music is the music of the gods."

"But it was not in Italy," suggested Hoffmann with a smile, "it was not in Italy that Mozart wrote the

'Marriage of Figaro' and 'Don Juan,' for he wrote one in Vienna for the emperor and the other at Prague for the Italian theatre there."

"True, young man, true, and I like to find in you the national spirit that leads you to stand up for Mozart. Yes, if the poor devil had lived and had taken one or two more journeys to Italy, he would certainly have been a master, a very great master. But, take this 'Don Juan' that you speak of, and this 'Marriage of Figaro,' — for what did he compose them? For Italian libretti, Italian words, with a reflection of the sunlight of Bologna, Rome, or Naples. Believe me, young man, one must have seen and felt that sunlight to appreciate it at its true worth. Look you, I left Italy four years ago. For four years I have shivered except when I have thought of Italy. The mere thought of it warms me. I need no cloak when I think of Italy. I need no coat, I need no cap even. The memory gives me new life. O music of Bologna! O sun of Naples! Oh! — "

For a moment the old man's face expressed supreme beatitude, and his whole body seemed to thrill with indescribable bliss, as if the hot waves of the southern sun were still pouring down upon his bald head, thence to his shoulders, and from his shoulders over his whole body.

Hoffmann was careful not to arouse him from his trance, but availed himself of the opportunity to look about, still hoping to see Antonia. But the doors were closed, and there was no sound behind any of them to indicate the presence of a living being.

He had no choice, therefore, but to return to Master Gottlieb, whose ecstasy gradually became less absorbing, until he finally emerged from it with a sort of shudder.

"Brrrr! you were saying, young man?" he said.

Hoffmann started.

"I was saying, Master Gottlieb, that, being a musician, I have come to you at the suggestion of my friend Zacharias Werner, who has told me of your kindness to young men."

"Oho! you are a musician!"

And Gottlieb drew himself up, raised his head, threw it back, and looked at Hoffmann through his spectacles, which at that moment were resting on the extreme end of his nose.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "a musician's head, a musician's brow, a musician's eye. What are you? composer or performer?"

"Both, Master Gottlieb."

"Both!" exclaimed Master Gottlieb. "Both! these young people are n't afraid of anything! It requires the whole life of a man, yes, of two men, of three men, to be either, and they are both, forsooth!"

He threw up his arms and whirled around as if he would bore a hole in the floor with his corkscrew of a right leg.

Having completed his pirouette, he came to a standstill in front of Hoffmann.

"Well, presumptuous youth," he said, "what have you done in the way of composition?"

"Sonatas, sacred music, quintettes."

"Sonatas, after Sebastian Bach! sacred music, after Pergolese! quintettes, after Francis Joseph Haydn! Ah! youth! youth! And as a performer," he added with an accent of profound pity, "as an instrumentalist, what instrument do you play?"

"Almost all, from the rebeck to the harpsichord, from the *viole d'amour* to the theorbum; but the instru-

ment to which I have paid most attention is the violin."

"Indeed," said Master Gottlieb satirically, "you have really done the violin that honor! Upon my word, it is a great piece of good fortune for the poor violin! Why, you wretched boy!" he added, hopping back to Hoffmann on a single leg to go the faster, "do you know what the violin is? The violin!" and Master Gottlieb balanced himself on the one leg we have mentioned, the other remaining in the air like a crane's; "the violin! why, it is the most difficult of all instruments. The violin was invented by Satan himself for the damnation of mankind, when he was at the end of his inventions. Satan has destroyed more souls with the violin than with the seven capital sins combined. Only the immortal Tartini — Tartini, my master, my hero, my god! — he was the only one who ever attained perfection on the violin. But he alone knows what it cost him in this world and the other to play a whole night with the devil's own violin and keep the bow. Oh! the violin! Do you know, sacrilegious youth, that that instrument conceals beneath its almost pitiful simplicity the most inexhaustible treasures of harmony that it is possible for man to drink from the cup of the gods? Have you studied the frame, the strings, the bow, the horsehair, the horsehair above all? Do you aspire to combine, to unite, to subdue under your fingers all the parts of that marvellous whole, which has resisted for two centuries the efforts of the greatest masters, which groans and laments and complains under their fingers, and has never sung except under the fingers of the immortal Tartini, my master? When you took up a violin for the first time, did you realize what you were doing, young man? But you are

not the first," added Master Gottlieb, with a sigh drawn from the inmost recesses of his being, "and you will not be the last to be undone by the violin. The violin, everlasting tempter! Others besides yourself have believed in their calling, and have wasted their lives scraping the strings, and you are going to increase the number of those poor wretches, who are already so numerous, so useless to society, and so insufferable to their fellow-creatures."

Suddenly, without any transition, he seized a violin and a bow, as a fencing-master takes a pair of foils, and handed them to Hoffmann.

"Come," he said, in a defiant tone, "play me something. Play, and I will tell you where you stand; and if you still have time to draw back from the precipice, I will rescue you as I rescued poor Zacharias Werner. He also played the violin. He played it fiercely, with frenzy. He dreamed of performing miracles, but I opened his eyes. He broke his violin into small pieces and burned them up. Then I put a bass-viol in his hands, and that finished calming him down. There was room on that for his long, thin fingers. At first he made them do their ten leagues an hour, and now he plays the bass-viol well enough to serenade his uncle on his birthday, whereas he never would have played the violin except to serenade the devil."

Hoffmann took the violin and looked it over.

"Yes, yes," said Master Gottlieb. "You look to see who made it, as the gourmand smells of the wine before drinking. Pick a string, just one, and if your ear does n't tell you the maker's name you are not worthy to touch it."

Hoffmann picked a string, which gave forth a prolonged, shivering, vibrating note.

"It 's an Antonio Stradivarius."

"Well, well, not bad; but of what period of Stradivarius' life? Let us see how far you can go. He made many violins between 1698 and 1728."

"Oh! as to that," said Hoffmann, "I confess my ignorance, and it seems to me impossible — "

"Impossible, blasphemer! impossible! that 's as if you were to tell me that it 's impossible to tell the age of wine by tasting it. Listen to me: As truly as this is the 10th day of May, 1793, that violin was made during the journey of the immortal Antonio from Cremona to Mantua in 1705, when he left his workshop in charge of his first assistant. So that that Stradivarius, I am happy to tell you, is only a third-rate instrument; but I greatly fear that it is still too good for a poor schoolboy like you. Ha! ha! ha!"

Hoffmann put the violin to his shoulder, and, not without a violent pulsation of the heart, began to play variations on the theme from "Don Juan," —

"La ci darem' la mano."

Master Gottlieb stood beside him, beating time with his head and with the foot at the end of his crooked leg. As Hoffmann played on, his face lighted up, his eyes shone, his upper teeth gnawed his lower lip, and on either side of that same lip protruded a tooth, which under ordinary circumstances it was intended to conceal, but which stood out at that moment like a boar's tusks. Finally, an allegro movement, over which Hoffmann achieved a signal triumph, extorted from Master Gottlieb a nod resembling a sign of approbation.

Hoffmann ended with a flourish which he thought extremely brilliant, but which, far from satisfying the old musician, caused him to make a wry face.

His face gradually resumed its serenity, however, and he said, bringing his hand down on the young man's shoulder, —

"Well, well, it 's not so bad as I supposed. When you have forgotten all you have learned, when you have ceased to indulge in those fashionable gymnastics, when you get the better of those jerky fits and those shrieking flourishes, something can be done with you."

Such praise, from a man so hard to please as the old musician, delighted Hoffmann beyond measure. Nor did he forget, swimming as he was in the musical ocean, that Gottlieb was the lovely Antonia's father.

So, taking on the bound the words the old man let fall, he asked, —

"Who will undertake to do something with me? Will you, Master Gottlieb?"

"Why not, young man? Why not, if you are willing to listen to old Murr?"

"I will listen to you, master, as long as you choose."

"Ah!" murmured the old man in a melancholy tone, for his glance wandered back into the past, and his memory was busy with bygone days, "I have known many virtuosi! I knew Corelli, — by tradition, it is true. He it was who opened the road, who hewed out the path. One must either play as Tartini played or give up playing. He was the first to divine that the violin is a god, or, at least, a temple from which a god may emerge. After him comes Paganini, a fair, intelligent violinist, but soft, too soft, especially in certain *appoggiamenti*. Then Germiniani, a powerful performer, but powerful by fits and starts, without transition. I went to Paris expressly to see him, as you propose to go to see the opera, — a maniac, my friend, a sleep-walker, my friend, a man who gesticulated in

his dreams, quick to hear the *tempo rubato*, fatal *tempo rubato*, which kills more musicians than the smallpox, the yellow fever, or the plague! Then I played my sonatas to him in the style of my master, the immortal Tartini, and he admitted his error. Unfortunately the pupil was buried up to the neck in his method. He was seventy-one years old, poor child! Forty years earlier I would have saved him, like Giardini. Him I took in time, but unfortunately he was incorrigible. The devil himself had taken possession of his left hand, and it would go and go and go at such a rate that his right hand could not follow it. Such fantasias and frills and flourishes! They were enough to give a Dutchman Saint Vitus' dance. And one day, when he was spoiling a magnificent passage in Jomelli's presence, dear Jomelli, who was the best fellow in the world, gave him such a smart rap that Giardini's cheek was swollen for a month, and Jomelli had his hand in bandages for three weeks. He was like Lulli, a madman, a downright madman, a rope-dancer, a performer of dangerous leaps, an equilibrist without a balancing rod, who should be given a balancing rod instead of a bow. Alas! alas! alas!" cried the old man piteously. "With a feeling of profound despair I say it, but with Nardini and me the noble art of violin-playing will die out; the art by which our common master Orpheus attracted animals, moved rocks, and built cities. Instead of building up, like the divine violin, we demolish, like the accursed trumpets. If the French ever enter Germany, if they want to beat down the walls of Philippsburg, which they have besieged so many times, they will only have to allow four violinists of my acquaintance to give a concert before the gates."

The old man paused to take breath, then resumed in a milder tone, —

"I know that there is Viotti, one of my own pupils, a boy with the best will in the world, but impatient, impudent, and unmethodical. As for Giarnowicki, he 's an ignorant fool, and the first thing I told my old Lisbeth was to close my door in hot haste if she ever heard that name pronounced outside it. Thirty years Lisbeth has been with me, but I tell you, young man, I shall discharge Lisbeth if she ever lets Giarnowicki into my house, — a Sarmatian, a Welshman, who dared speak ill of the master of masters, the immortal Tartini! Oh! I 'll give lessons and advice gratis as long as he wants to the man who brings me Giarnowicki's head. As for you, my boy," continued the old man, returning to Hoffmann, "as for you, you are not very strong yet, it is true; but Rode and Kreutzer, my pupils, were no stronger than you; and I was saying that by coming to see Master Gottlieb, in applying to Master Gottlieb, in procuring a recommendation to him from a man who knows and appreciates him, that madman, Zacharias Werner, you prove that there is an artist's heart in that breast. And so, young man, I do not now propose to put an Antonio Stradivarius in your hands; nor even a Gramulo, that old master whom the immortal Tartini esteemed so highly that he never played except upon Gramulos. No, but an Antonio Amati, the grandfather, the ancestor, the original parent stock of all the violins that have ever been made, — that instrument, which will be my Antonia's marriage portion, is the one upon which I wish now to hear you play. It is Ulysses' bow, you see, and whoever can bend Ulysses' bow is worthy of Penelope."

Thereupon the old man opened a velvet case lined

with rich gold lace, and took from it such a violin as, it seemed, could never have existed before, and such as Hoffmann alone perhaps could remember having seen in the imaginary concerts given by his great-uncles and great-aunts.

He bent over the venerable instrument and said, as he handed it to Hoffmann, —

"Take it, and try not to be too unworthy of it."

Hoffmann bowed, took the instrument with respect, and began an old *étude* by Sebastian Bach.

"Bach, Bach," muttered Gottlieb. "He is well enough for the organ, but he knew nothing about the violin. No matter."

At the first note Hoffmann drew from the instrument, he started, for he was enough of a musician to realize what a treasure-house of melody had been placed in his hands.

The bow was so curved that it enabled the player to touch all four strings at once, and the last string soared aloft to celestial notes of such marvellous beauty as Hoffmann had never dreamed could be produced by the hand of man.

Meanwhile the old man stood near him, with his head thrown back, blinking his eyes, and saying, by way of encouragement, —

"Not bad, not bad, young man; the right hand, the right hand! The left hand is only the movement; the right hand is the soul. Come, soul! soul!! soul!!!"

Hoffmann felt that old Gottlieb was right, and he realized the truth of what he told him at first, that he would have to unlearn all that he had learned; and, by an insensible but constant transition, he passed from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, from caresses to threats, from the lightning flash to the thunderbolt and lost himself

in a torrent of melody which rose like a cloud and fell in rippling cascades, in liquid pearls, in damp spray; and he was under the influence of a new mental condition, of a state bordering on ecstasy, when suddenly his left hand relaxed its hold on the strings, the bow stood still in his right hand, the violin slipped from his shoulder, his eyes became fixed upon a certain point and glowed like live coals.

The door had opened, and Hoffmann, looking in the mirror in front of which he was playing, saw the fair Antonia appear in the doorway like a phantom evoked by a divine melody, her mouth partly open, her breast heaving, her eyes moist.

Hoffmann uttered an exclamation of pleasure, and Master Gottlieb had barely time to save the venerable Antonio Amati as it dropped from the young violinist's hand.

V.

ANTONIA.

ANTONIA appeared a thousand times more beautiful to Hoffmann when she opened the door and crossed the threshold, than when he saw her descending the church steps.

It was because he was able to grasp at a single glance, in the mirror in which the young girl's image was reflected, and which was within two steps, all the points of beauty which had escaped him at a distance.

Antonia was barely seventeen years old. She was of medium height, rather tall than short, but so slender without being thin, so willowy without being weakly built, that all the timeworn comparisons to a lily swaying on its stalk, to a palm-tree bending in the wind, would have failed to do justice to the Italian *morbidezza*, the only word that expresses the idea of gentle languor which the sight of her aroused. Her mother was, like Juliet, one of the loveliest flowers of the springtime of Verona, and in Antonia were found, not blended, but side by side, — and it was in that that the girl's charm consisted, — the beauties of the two races which dispute for the palm of beauty. Thus, with the fine texture of skin, characteristic of the women of the North, she had the dead white color of the women of the South; thus her fine, thick flaxen hair, flying about in the slightest breeze like a golden vapor, shaded eyes and eyebrows of a velvety black. Strangely enough, the harmonious commingling of the two races was especially noticeable in her

voice. So, when Antonia spoke German, the soft accents of the beautiful language in which, as Dante says, the *si* plays so prominent a part, softened the harshness of the Germanic accent, whereas, on the other hand, when she spoke Italian, the somewhat too flexible tongue of Metastasio and Goldoni assumed a firmness imparted to it by the virile strength of the tongue of Schiller and Goethe.

Nor was this fusion to be remarked on the physical side only. Antonia was mentally a marvellous and rare example of what the sun of Italy and the fogs of Germany can perform in the way of combining widely contrasted forms of poesy. You would have said that she was at once a muse and a fairy, the Beatrice of the "Divina Commedia" and the Lorelei of the ballad.

The fact was that Antonia, the artiste *par excellence*, was the daughter of a great artiste. Her mother, who had been brought up in the Italian school, fought a hand to hand fight one day with German music. The score of Gluck's "Alcestis" had fallen into her hands, and she induced her husband, Master Gottlieb, to translate the poem into Italian. When it was translated, she sang it at Vienna; but she presumed too much upon her strength, or rather, wonderful songstress that she was, she did not know the measure of her own sensitiveness. At the third performance of the opera, — which had achieved the greatest success, — in Alcestis' beautiful solo, —

> "Divinities of Styx, ye ministers of death,
> I 'll not invoke your cruel sympathy.
> I rescue a fond husband from his mournful fate,
> But I abandon to you a true, faithful wife," —

when she reached the *D*, which she gave with the full strength of her lungs, she turned pale, staggered and

fainted: a blood-vessel had burst in that swelling chest; the sacrifice to the infernal gods was consummated in reality; Antonia's mother was dead.

Poor Master Gottlieb was leading the orchestra. From his desk he saw her whom he loved above all things turn pale, stagger and fall; more than that, he heard the chord break upon which her life depended, and he uttered a terrible shriek which mingled with the last breath of the dying artiste.

Therein, perhaps, lay the secret of Master Gottlieb's hatred for the German masters. It was Gluck who, innocently to be sure, had caused the death of his Teresa; but he hated Gluck none the less with a deadly hatred, because of the profound grief he had suffered, which had not been allayed until he began to transfer to Antonia as she grew to girlhood all the love he had had for her mother.

At seventeen, the age at which she had now arrived, the girl had taken the place of everything else in the old man's life; he lived and breathed in Antonia. The thought of her death had never presented itself to his mind; but, even if it had so presented itself, he would not have been seriously disturbed, because it would never have occurred to him that he could survive Antonia.

And so the appearance of Antonia at the door of his study was welcomed by him no less enthusiastically than by Hoffmann, although the father's feeling was very different in kind.

The girl came forward slowly; her eyes were bright with tears. She walked up to Hoffmann, put out her hand, and said, with modest familiarity, as if she had known the young man ten years,—

"Good morning, brother."

Master Gottlieb had remained silent and motionless

from the moment his daughter appeared. His heart, as was always the case, had left his body, and was fluttering about her, singing in her ears all the melodies of love and joy that a father's heart can sing at sight of his beloved daughter.

He had placed his cherished Antonio Amati on the table, and, clasping his hands as he would have done before the Virgin, he watched his child approach.

As to Hoffmann, he did not know whether he was asleep or awake, whether he was in heaven or on earth, whether it was a woman or an angel coming to him.

So it was that he almost recoiled when Antonia drew near and offered him her hand, calling him her brother.

"You, my sister!" he said, in a stifled voice.

"Yes," said Antonia. "It is not blood that makes the family, but the mind. All flowers are sisters by their perfume, all artists are brothers by their art. I have never seen you, it is true, but I know you; your bow has told me the story of your life. You are a poet, a little mad, my poor friend! Alas! it is the glowing spark that God confines in our heads or in our hearts that consumes our brains or our hearts."

Then she turned to Master Gottlieb.

"Good morning, father," she said, "why have you not kissed your Antonia? Ah! I understand: 'Il Matrimonio Segreto,' 'Stabat Mater,' Cimarosa, Pergolese, Porpora. What is Antonia beside those great geniuses? a poor child who loves you, but whom you forget for them."

"I forget you!" cried Gottlieb, "old Murr forget Antonia! The father forget his daughter! For what? for a parcel of wretched notes, for a collection of semibreves and quavers, of white notes and black notes, of flats and sharps! Oh, yes! see how I forget you!"

He whirled about on his crooked leg with astounding agility, and with his other leg and both hands sent flying about the room the different parts of the score of "Il Matrimonio Segreto," which were all ready to be distributed to the members of the orchestra.

"Father! father!" said Antonia.

"Fire! fire!" cried Master Gottlieb, "give me fire that I may burn them all: Pergolese, Cimarosa, Paesiello, my Stradivariuses, my Gramulos, and my Antonio Amati! Has not my child, my Antonia, said that I love chords, wood, and paper better than my own flesh and blood? Fire! fire!! fire!!!"

The old man ran about like a madman, hopped on his crooked leg like the Lame Devil, and waved his arms like a windmill.

Antonia watched the old man's frenzy with the sweet smile of satisfied filial pride. She knew well — she who had never played the flirt with any man but her father — that her power over the old man was without bounds, that his heart was a kingdom in which she reigned an absolute sovereign. So she stopped him in the midst of his evolutions, and, drawing him toward her, deposited a simple kiss on his forehead.

The old man uttered a cry of joy, took his daughter in his arms, lifted her up as if she were a bird, and after twisting around on his leg three or four times, sank at last upon a capacious couch, where he began to rock her as a mother rocks her child.

At first Hoffman had gazed at Master Gottlieb in dismay; when he saw him scatter the sheets of music about, he believed that he was a raving maniac. But he was speedily reassured by Antonia's tranquil smile, and he respectfully collected the scattered sheets and placed them on the tables and stands, glancing out of the corner of his

eye all the while at the strange group, in which even the old man made a poetic figure.

Suddenly something soft, sweet, ethereal passed through the air, a breath of vapor, a melody, yes, something even more divine: it was Antonia's voice attacking, in obedience to her artistic caprice, that wonderful composition of Stradella's which saved its author's life, the *Pieta, Signore.*

At the first vibration of that angelic voice, Hoffmann stood as if turned to stone, while old Gottlieb, gently lifting his daughter from his knees, deposited her, recumbent as she was, upon the couch; then, running to his Antonio Amati, he began to accompany her, producing with his bow an undercurrent of harmony, and supporting Antonia's song as the angel supports the soul he carries up to heaven.

Antonia's voice was a soprano, possessing the greatest range that the divine lavishness can bestow, not upon a woman's but upon an angel's voice. Antonia's range was five octaves and a half; she could sing with equal facility high *C*, that divine note which seems adapted to none but celestial concerts, and the *C* of the fifth octave of low notes. Hoffmann had never heard anything of such velvet-like softness as the first four measures, sung without accompaniment, *Pieta, Signore, di me dolente.* That aspiration of the suffering soul Godward, that fervent prayer to the Lord to take pity on the suffering that found voice to lament, assumed in Antonia's mouth an accent of divine respect that resembled terror. The accompaniment too, which had taken up the phrase as it floated between heaven and earth, which had, so to speak, caught it in its arms after the *la* had died away, and which repeated the lament *piano, piano,* like an echo, — the accompaniment was in every way worthy of

the heart-broken voice, and as sorrowful. It said, not in Italian, not in German, not in French, but in the universal tongue called music: —

"Have pity, O Lord, have pity on me, miserable creature that I am! Have pity, O Lord, and if my prayer reaches Thine ear, may Thy rigor be disarmed and may Thy glance be less stern and more merciful as it is turned upon me!"

And nevertheless, while following, while forming a frame, as it were, for the voice, the accompaniment left it all its liberty, all its fulness. It was a caress, not an embrace, a support and not an embarrassment; and when, at the first *sforzando*, when the voice rose to the *re* and the two *fas* as if to try to ascend to heaven, then the accompaniment seemed to fear burdening it as an earthly thing, and almost abandoned it to the wings of faith, only coming to its support on the *mi* sharp, that is to say, on the *diminuendo*, when, wearied by its effort, the voice fell back as if exhausted, like Canova's Madonna, on her knees, sitting upon her knees, in whom everything seems to bend, soul and body alike, crushed beneath the terrible fear that the Creator's pity will not be sufficiently great to forget the fault of His creature.

And when, in a tremulous voice, she continued: "May I never be damned and hurled into the everlasting fire of Thy rigor, O Almighty God!" then the accompaniment ventured to mingle with the trembling voice which, seeing the ever burning flames from afar, besought the Lord to turn them aside. Thereupon, the accompaniment in its turn prayed, implored, groaned, ascended with the voice to the *fa*, descended with it to the *do*, accompanying it in its weakness, sustaining it in its terror; and then, when the voice, gasping and nerveless, died in Antonia's chest, the accompaniment continued

alone, as the prayers of the survivors, plaintive and murmuring, continue after the soul has flown and is already on the way to heaven.

At that moment the supplicating tones of Master Gottlieb's violin were reenforced by an unexpected burst of melody, at once sweet and powerful, almost divine. Antonia raised herself upon her elbow; Master Gottlieb turned half round and stood with his bow suspended over the strings of his violin. Hoffmann, who was at first dazed, intoxicated, delirious with joy, had realized that that sorrowing heart needed a little hope, and that it would break if a divine ray did not afford it a glimpse of heaven, and he had rushed to an organ and spread his ten fingers over the shuddering keys, and the organ, heaving a deep sigh, had mingled its notes with Gottlieb's violin and Antonia's voice.

A marvellous thing was the repetition of the *Pieta, Signore* motif, accompanied by that voice of hope, and not pursued by terror as in the first part; and when, with full faith in her genius as in her prayer, Antonia attacked the *fa* of the *volgi* with the whole power of her voice, a shudder ran through old Gottlieb's veins, and a cry escaped from Hoffmann's lips, as, drowning the Antonio Amati beneath the torrents of melody poured forth by the organ, he continued Antonia's voice after it had died away, and upon the wings, no longer of an angel, but of a tempest, seemed to carry that soul's last sigh to the feet of the Almighty and All-Merciful God.

Then there was a moment's silence; the three looked at one another, and their hands met in a fraternal grasp as their souls had met in a common harmony.

And from that moment, not only did Antonia call Hoffmann her brother, but old Gottlieb Murr called him his son.

VI.

THE OATH.

PERHAPS the reader will ask himself, or rather will ask us, how it happened that, Antonia's mother having died because of her singing, Master Gottlieb Murr permitted his daughter, that heart of his heart, to run the risk of a danger similar to that to which her mother had succumbed.

And in the beginning, when he heard Antonia try her first song, the poor father had trembled like the leaf upon which a bird perches while he sings. But Antonia was a veritable bird, and the old musician soon discovered that song was her natural language. And God, by bestowing upon her a voice of such range that it had not perhaps its equal in the world, had signified that Master Gottlieb had nothing to fear in that direction at all events; indeed, when that natural gift of song was reenforced by musical study, when the most complicated difficulties of the scale had been placed before the girl and overcome instantly with wonderful facility, without distortion of the features, without effort, without causing a single chord to show in her neck, without so much as a contraction of the eyes, he realized the perfection of the instrument; and as Antonia, even when singing pieces written for the highest voices, was never required to do her best, he was convinced that there was no danger in allowing the sweet-voiced nightingale to follow the bent of her melodious calling.

But Master Gottlieb had forgotten that the musical chord is not the only one that resounds in a maiden's

heart, and that there is another one much more fragile, more easily played upon, and more deadly, — the chord of love!

That chord waked in the poor child's heart at the first note produced by Hoffmann's bow. Bending over her embroidery in the room adjoining that in which the young and the old man were, she had raised her head at the first shuddering sound that passed through the air. She had listened; then little by little a strange sensation had crept into her heart, had glided through her veins in unfamiliar thrills. She had risen slowly to her feet, resting one hand on her chair, while the other dropped the embroidery from its open fingers. She had stood for an instant without moving; then she had walked slowly toward the door and had appeared, as we have said, the shadow of material life, a poetic vision, at the door of Master Gottlieb's study.

We have seen how music had blended those three souls into a single one in its white-hot crucible, and how, at the end of the concert, Hoffmann had become as one of the family.

It was the hour at which old Gottlieb was accustomed to dine. He invited Hoffmann to dine with him, and the invitation was accepted with the same cordiality with which it was given.

Thereupon for a few moments the lovely and poetic virgin of the divine aria was transformed into an excellent housekeeper. Antonia poured tea like Clarissa Harlowe, spread the butter on slices of bread like Charlotte, and ended by taking her seat at the table and eating like an ordinary mortal.

The Germans do not understand poetry as we do. According to the theory of our self-conscious society, the woman who eats and drinks loses the poetic glamor. If

a young and pretty woman sits at the table, it is only to preside over the repast; if she has a glass in front of her, it is to put her gloves in, unless, indeed, she keeps her gloves on her hands; if she has a plate, it is to hold a bunch of grapes, of which the immaterial creature condescends to suck a few of the finest at the close of the feast, as a bee sucks a flower.

The reader will understand that, after the welcome Hoffmann had received at Master Gottlieb's, he went again the next day and the next and every day thereafter. As far as Master Gottlieb was concerned, the frequency of Hoffmann's visits did not seem to disturb him. Antonia was too pure, too chaste, she trusted her father too fully, for the old man to harbor a suspicion that she could commit a sin. His daughter was to him as Saint Cecilia, the Virgin Mary, an angel from heaven; the divine essence in her was so pre-eminent over earthly substance, that the old man had never thought it necessary to tell her that there is more danger in the contact of two bodies than in the union of two souls.

So Hoffmann was happy, as happy, that is to say, as it is given to a mortal creature to be. The sun of joy never illumines every corner of a man's heart; there is always, at some point or other, a dark spot that reminds man that absolute happiness does not exist in this world, but only in heaven.

But Hoffmann had one advantage over the great majority of his kind. It often happens that a man cannot define the cause of the sorrow that assails him in the midst of his happiness, the shadow that falls, dark and ominous, upon his radiant felicity.

Now Hoffmann knew what it was that marred his happiness.

It was the promise he had made Zacharias Werner to

join him in Paris; it was that strange longing to visit France, which vanished as soon as Hoffmann was in Antonia's presence, but regained the upper hand as soon as he was alone; more than that, as time passed and Zacharias' letters, reminding his friend of his promise, became more urgent, Hoffmann became more melancholy.

At last the young girl's presence was no longer sufficient to drive away the phantom that haunted Hoffmann thenceforth, even when he was at Antonia's side. Often, when he was with her, he fell into a deep reverie. Of what was he dreaming? of Zacharias Werner, whose voice he seemed to hear. Often his eye, after wandering vaguely about, seemed to rest upon a certain point on the horizon. What did that eye see, or rather, what did it fancy that it saw? The road to Paris, and at one of the turns in the road Zacharias walking before him and motioning to him to follow.

Gradually, the phantom that had at first appeared to Hoffmann at rare and unequal intervals, returned with more regularity, and at last haunted him from morning till night.

Hoffmann fell deeper and deeper in love with Antonia. He felt that Antonia was necessary to his life, that she was his only hope of future happiness; but he felt, too, that before entering upon that happiness, and to make sure that it would be enduring, he must carry out the pilgrimage he had planned; for otherwise the desire confined in his heart, strange as it might appear, would gnaw constantly at it.

One day, as he sat beside Antonia while Master Gottlieb in his cabinet was copying the score of Pergolese's "Stabat," which he proposed to perform at the Frankfort Philharmonic Society, Hoffmann fell into one of his cus-

tomary fits of musing. Antonia, after watching him for a long while, took both his hands in hers.

"You must go there, my friend," she said.

Hoffmann stared at her in amazement.

"Go there?" he repeated; "where, pray?"

"To France, to Paris."

"Who told you, Antonia, of that secret thought of my heart, which I dare not confess to myself?"

"I might claim to possess the power of a fairy, Theodor, and say to you, 'I have read your thoughts, I have read your eyes, I have read your heart;' but I should say what is not true. No, I remember, that is all."

"And what do you remember, my beloved Antonia?"

"I remember that on the day before you first came here, Zacharias Werner came and told us of your projected journey, your ardent desire to see Paris; a desire cherished for more than a year, and on the point of being gratified. Since then you have told me what prevented you from going. You have told me that, on seeing me for the first time, you were seized by that irresistible feeling by which I was myself seized when I listened to your playing, and now it only remains for you to tell me this: that you still love me as dearly."

Hoffmann made a gesture.

"Do not take the trouble to tell me," continued Antonia; "I know that you do; but there is something even stronger than your love, and that is your longing to go to France, to join Zacharias, to see Paris, in fact."

"Antonia!" cried Hoffmann, "all that you say is true, with the exception of one point: that is, that there is anything on earth stronger than my love! No, Antonia, I swear to you that that longing — a strange longing which I do not understand — I should have buried in my heart if you had not drawn it forth yourself. You

are not mistaken, Antonia! There is a voice that summons me to Paris, a voice stronger than my will, and yet, I say again, I should not have heeded it,— that voice is the voice of destiny!"

"Very well, let us fulfil our destiny, my friend. You shall go to-morrow. How much time do you want?"

"A month, Antonia; in a month I shall return."

"A month will not be enough for you, Theodor; in a month you will have seen nothing. I give you two months; I give you three months; I give you all the time you want, in short; but I demand one thing, or rather, two things of you."

"What are they, dear Antonia? What are they? tell me quickly."

"To-morrow will be Sunday, the day when high mass is celebrated. Look out of your window as you did on the day that Zacharias Werner went away, and you will see me go up the church steps as on that day, my dear, only more sad than then. Come and join me in my usual place; come and sit beside me, and at the moment when the priest blesses our Lord's blood, you must take two oaths,— one, to remain true to me; the other, not to gamble any more."

"Oh! whatever you wish, on the spot, dear Antonia; I swear —"

"Nay, Theodor, you shall swear to-morrow."

"Antonia, Antonia, you are an angel!"

"As we are about to part, Theodor, have you not something to say to my father?"

"Yes, you are right. But I confess, Antonia, that I hesitate, I tremble. Great God! who am I that I dare to hope —"

"You are the man I love, Theodor. Go and speak to my father, go."

She waved her hand to Hoffmann, and opened the door leading to a small room used by her as an oratory.

Hoffmann looked until the door had closed, and sent to her through the door all the outpourings of his heart, with all the kisses of his lips.

Then he entered Master Gottlieb's study.

Master Gottlieb was so accustomed to Hoffmann's footsteps, that he did not even take his eyes from the desk on which he was copying the "Stabat." The young man entered and stood behind him.

After a moment, as he heard nothing more, not even the young man's breathing, Master Gottlieb turned.

"Ah! is it you, boy?" he said, throwing back his head so that he could see Hoffmann through his spectacles. "What have you to say to me?"

Hoffmann opened his mouth, but he closed it again without having uttered a sound.

"Have you gone dumb?" asked the old man. "Bless my soul! that would be a pity. A rascal who uses his voice as you do when you set about it, can't lose it like that, unless by way of punishment for having abused it!"

"No, Master Gottlieb, no, I have n't lost my voice, thank God! But, what I have to say to you —"

"Well?"

"Why, it seems to me rather hard to say."

"Bah! is it such a very hard thing to say: 'Master Gottlieb, I love your daughter?'"

"You know that, Master Gottlieb?"

"Upon my word! I must have been a great fool, or rather a great stupid, not to have discovered your love."

"And yet you have allowed me to go on loving her."

"Why not? as she loves you."

"But you know that I have no fortune, Master Gottlieb."

"Pshaw! have the birds of the air a fortune? They sing, they mate, they build a nest, and God feeds them. We artists much resemble birds; we sing, and God comes to our aid. When the singing is not sufficient, you will be a painter; when the painting is not sufficient, you will be a musician. I was no richer than you when I married my poor Teresa; but we never were without bread or a roof to shelter us. I have always needed money, and I have never failed to get it. Are you rich in love? that is all I ask you. Are you worthy of the treasure you covet? that is all I want to know. Do you love Antonia better than your life, better than your soul? If you do, my mind is at rest; Antonia will never lack anything. If you do not love her, that is a different matter; though you have a hundred thousand thalers a year, she will always lack everything."

Hoffmann was ready to kneel before the artist's beautiful philosophy. He bent over the old man's hand, and the old man drew him to his side and embraced him.

"Well, well," he said, "it is settled. Take your journey, as you are tormented by the wild longing to hear the horrible music of Monsieur Méhul and Monsieur Dalayrac; it 's a young man's disease that will soon be cured. I have no fear; take your journey, my dear boy, and come back to us. You will find Mozart here and Beethoven, Cimarosa, Pergolese, Paesiello, Porpora, and, in addition, Master Gottlieb and his daughter; that is to say, a father and a wife. Go, my child, go."

And Master Gottlieb once more embraced Hoffmann, who, seeing that night was approaching, realized that he had no time to lose, and went home to make preparations for his departure.

The next morning early, Hoffmann was at his window.

As the time for leaving Antonia drew near, the separa-

tion seemed more and more impossible to him. The whole delightful period of his life that had just passed, the seven months which had flown by like a single day, and which appeared in his memory, now like a vast horizon which he embraced at a single glance, and again like a series of happy days, flitting by one after another, smiling and crowned with flowers; Antonia's sweet songs, which had formed an atmosphere about him thickly sown with delicious melodies,—all this was such a potent attraction that it struggled, almost successfully, with the unknown, that wonderful wizard, who attracts the strongest, the least emotional hearts.

At ten o'clock Antonia appeared at the corner of the street, where, seven months before, Hoffmann had seen her for the first time. Her maid Lisbeth followed her as usual, and they went up the church steps. On the top step Antonia turned, saw Hoffmann, summoned him with a motion of her hand, and entered the church.

Hoffmann rushed out of the house and entered the church. Antonia was already kneeling and in prayer.

Hoffmann was a Protestant, and the chanting in a foreign tongue had always seemed most absurd to him; but when he heard Antonia's voice soaring upward in the church music that is at once so soft and so majestic, he was sorry that he did not know the words, so that he might join his voice to hers, which was made even sweeter by the profound melancholy under which she was laboring.

Throughout the celebration of the mass she sang on, in the same voice in which the angels in heaven sing. And when the choir boy's bell announced the consecration of the host, when the faithful bowed their heads before the God who rose above their heads in the priest's hands, Antonia alone raised her head.

"Swear," she said.

"I swear," said Hoffmann, in a trembling voice, "I swear to give up gambling."

"Is that the only oath you intend to take, my friend?"

"Oh, no! wait. I swear to remain true to you in heart and mind, in body and soul."

"Upon what do you swear it?"

"Oh!" cried Hoffmann, in intense excitement, "I swear it upon what I hold most dear and most sacred, upon your life!"

"Thanks!" cried Antonia. "For if you do not keep your oath, I shall die."

Hoffmann started, a shudder ran through his body; he did not regret what he had done, but he was afraid.

The priest descended the steps of the altar, carrying the blessed sacrament in the host.

As the divine body of Our Lord passed by, she seized Hoffmann's hand.

"You heard his oath, did you not, O God?" she said.

Hoffmann essayed to speak.

"Not another word, not one; I propose that the words of your oath, being the last I have heard from your lips, shall ring forever in my ears. *Auf wiederseh'n*, my dear, *auf wiederseh'n*."

The girl glided away, light as a shadow, leaving a locket in her lover's hand. Hoffmann looked after her as Orpheus must have looked after the fleeing Eurydice. When she had disappeared, he opened the locket.

It contained a portrait of Antonia, resplendent with youth and beauty.

Two hours later Hoffmann took his place in the same diligence Zacharias Werner had taken, saying to himself,—

"Never fear, Antonia. Ah! no, I will not gamble! Ah! yes, I will be true to you!"

VII.

A PARIS BARRIER IN 1793.

THE young man's journey through the France he had so longed to see was melancholy enough. It was not that he experienced so many difficulties on approaching the centre as he would have met with had he been going to the frontier. No, the French Republic welcomed the coming more warmly than it sped the parting guest.

However, a stranger was not admitted to the honor of enjoying the benefits of that precious form of government until he had complied with certain formalities that were none too mild.

It was the period when the French knew least about writing, but when they wrote more than ever before. It seemed meet, therefore, to all recently appointed functionaries to abandon their domestic or mechanical callings, in order to sign and visa passports, draw up descriptions, invite recommendations, and, in a word, to do whatever befits the profession of patriot.

The paper trade had never been so flourishing as at that period. That endemic disease of the French people, being grafted upon terrorism, produced the finest specimens of grotesque calligraphy that had ever been heard of up to that time.

Hoffmann's passport was remarkably small. It was the day of small things. Newspapers, books, the pamphlets hawked about the streets were all reduced to the simple octavo at the largest. But, small as it was,

the traveller's passport was invaded as soon as he entered Alsace, by official signatures which were not unlike the zigzags described by a drunken man as he staggers diagonally across the street, colliding with both walls.

Hoffmann was compelled, therefore, to add one leaf to his passport there, and another in Lorraine, where the handwritings assumed especially colossal proportions. Where patriotism was hottest, the writers were most artless. There was one mayor, who filled two pages, back and front, with an autograph memorandum thus conceived: —

"Auphemann, chune Allemans, ami de la liberté, se rendan à Pari ha pié.

"*Signé:* GOLIER." [1]

Armed with that document, giving the above full particulars concerning his native country, his age, his principles, his destination, and his means of transport, Hoffmann's only preoccupation was to sew all those civic fragments together, and we should say that when he reached Paris he had a very respectable volume, which, he said, he proposed to have bound in tin if he should ever undertake another journey, because, as he was compelled to keep the sheets constantly in his hand, they ran too great a risk in a simple pasteboard cover.

Everywhere these or similar words were repeated to him: —

"My dear traveller, the provinces are still habitable, but Paris is in a very excited state. Be on your guard,

[1] Hoffmann, jeune Allemand, ami de la liberté, se rendant à Paris à pied.

Hoffmann, a young German, friend of liberty, on his way to Paris on foot.

citizen, they have a very captious police force in Paris, and, being a German, you may not be treated like a good Frenchman."

To which Hoffmann replied with a proud smile, reminiscent of the proud bearing of the Spartans when the Thessalian spies tried to exaggerate the forces of Xerxes, King of the Persians.

He arrived before Paris. It was evening, and the barriers were closed.

Hoffmann spoke French fairly well, but a man is a German or he is not. If he is not a German he may have an accent which after a while will pass for the accent of one of our provinces. If he is a German, he is always known for a German.

We must explain how police duty was done at the barriers.

In the first place they were closed. Then seven or eight sectionaries, shrewd and intelligent idlers, amateur Lavaters, smoking their pipes, prowled around in squads, in attendance upon two or three agents of the municipal police.

Those worthy fellows, who, passing from one service to another, had ended by haunting all the clubs, all the district bureaux, all the places into which politics had crept in an active or a passive sense; who had seen every deputy at the National Assembly or the Convention, all the aristocrats, male and female, in the galleries, all the notorious dandies on the boulevards, all the suspected celebrities at the theatres, all the prisoners, whether convicted or discharged, in the courts, and all the respited priests in the prisons, — those worthy patriots knew their Paris so well that every familiar face was likely to impress them as it passed, and, we may say, almost invariably did so impress them.

It was no simple matter to disguise one's self in those days. Too much magnificence in the costume caught the eye, too great simplicity aroused suspicion. As uncleanliness was one of the most popular insignia of true civism, every water-carrier, every scullion might conceal an aristocrat; and then, how could the white hand with the beautiful nails be entirely disguised. And that aristocratic gait, which is the simplest of all gaits in our day, when the lowliest wear the highest heels, — how conceal it from twenty pairs of eyes keener than the nose of the bloodhound following a trail?

A traveller was therefore, immediately upon his arrival, searched, questioned, stripped bare, morally speaking, with a facility born of practice, and a liberty born of — liberty.

Hoffmann appeared before that tribunal about six o'clock in the evening of December 7. The weather was dull and disagreeable, a mixture of fog and sleet; but the bearskin and otter skin caps that imprisoned the patriot heads kept so much warm blood in their brains and their ears that they were in full possession of their presence of mind and their unexcelled faculties of investigation.

Hoffmann was stopped by a hand placed lightly on his breast.

The young traveller was dressed in an iron-gray coat and a heavy overcoat, and his German boots outlined a very shapely leg. He had encountered no mud since the last post-house, although the post-chaise had been unable to go on because of the sleet, and Hoffmann had done six leagues on foot, over a road thinly covered with frozen snow.

"Where are you going, citizen, with your fine boots?" said a police agent to the young man.

"I am going to Paris, citizen."

"You take a good deal for granted, my young *Prussssian*," rejoined the sectionary, pronouncing the word with a prodigality of *s's* which attracted the attention of half a score of idlers to the traveller.

The Prussians were at that moment as great foes to France as the Philistines were to the compatriots of Samson the Israelite.

"Well, yes, I am a *Pruzian*," retorted Hoffmann, changing the sectionary's five *s's* into a *z*. "What then?"

"Why, if you 're a Prussian, you 're a little spy of Pitt and Cobourg, eh?"

"Read my passports," said Hoffmann, exhibiting his volume to one of the scholars of the barrier.

"Come," replied the man addressed, turning on his heel to escort the stranger to the guard-house.

Hoffmann followed his guide with perfect tranquillity.

When, by the light of the smoking candles, the patriots saw the nervous youth, with steadfast eye and disordered hair, hammering at his French with the utmost conscientiousness, one of them cried, —

"He won't deny that he 's an aristocrat. See what hands and feet he has!"

"You 're a fool, citizen," retorted Hoffmann. "I 'm as good a patriot as you, and what 's more, I 'm an artist."

As he spoke he drew from his pocket one of those appallingly huge pipes, of which a German diver alone can find the bottom.

The pipe produced a prodigious effect upon the sectionaries, who were smoking their tobacco in miniature vessels.

They all gazed wonderingly at the young man as he

packed into his pipe, with a dexterity born of long practice, enough tobacco to last them a week.

Then he sat down, patiently held a light to the tobacco until there was a great crust of fire on the surface of the bowl, and expelled at regular intervals dense clouds of smoke, which emerged in graceful bluish columns from his nose and his lips.

"He smokes well," said one of the sectionaries.

"And it seems that he 's a famous fellow," said another. "Just look at his certificates."

"What have you come to Paris for?" asked a third.

"To study the science of liberty," replied Hoffmann.

"And what else?" continued the Frenchman, little affected by the heroic ring of the phrase, probably because he had heard it so much.

"And painting," said Hoffmann.

"Ah! you 're a painter, like Citizen David, are you?"

"Exactly."

"Do you know how to paint Roman patriots, all naked, as he does?"

"I paint them all dressed," Hoffmann replied.

"They 're not so fine that way."

"That depends," said Hoffmann with imperturbable *sang froid.*

"Do my portrait," said the sectionary admiringly.

"I will gladly do it."

Hoffmann took a burning brand from the stove, waited until the glowing end had cooled, then drew upon the whitewashed wall one of the ugliest faces that ever dishonored the capital of the civilized world.

The fur cap and fox's tail, the driveling mouth, the thick whiskers, the short pipe, the retreating chin, were copied with such rare fidelity to truth, that the whole

of the guard on duty requested the favor of having their portraits done by the young man.

Hoffmann granted their requests with good grace, and sketched on the wall a series of patriots, quite as successfully executed but less noble, most assuredly, than the bourgeois in Rembrandt's "Ronde Nocturne."

When he had once put the patriots in good humor, there was no further question of suspicion. The German was a naturalized Parisian. They offered him beer, and he, like the thoughtful youth he was, offered his hosts Burgundy, which they accepted with the greatest cordiality.

Then it was that one of them, more cunning than the others, took his thick nose in the hook of his forefinger, and said to Hoffmann with a wink of his left eye, —

"Tell us one thing, Citizen German."

"What is it, my friend?"

"Tell us the object of your journey."

"I have told you: politics and painting."

"No, no, something else."

"I assure you, citizen — "

"You understand, of course, that we sha'n't make any charges against you. We like you, and we 'll protect you; but there are two delegates here from the Cordeliers Club and two from the Jacobins. I myself belong to the Brothers and Friends. Select among us the club to which you prefer to do homage."

"Homage, what do you mean?" said Hoffmann, greatly surprised.

"Oh! don't try to hide it. It 's such a fine thing that you ought to display it everywhere."

"Really, citizen, you make me blush; explain yourself."

"Look and tell me if I am not good at guessing."

He opened the book of passports and pointed with his fat finger to the following lines under the heading of Strasburg:—

"Hoffmann, travelling from Mannheim, had in his possession at Strasburg a box marked thus: O. B."

"That is true," said Hoffmann.

"Very good! what does that box contain?"

"I declared its contents to the customs officers at Strasburg."

"Just see, citizens, what this sly dog is bringing here. You remember what our patriots at Auxerre sent us?"

"Yes," said one; "a box of lard."

"What for?"

"To grease the guillotine," cried a number of well-satisfied voices.

"Well!" said Hoffmann, changing color a little, "what connection can there be between this box of mine and the box sent by the patriots of Auxerre?"

"Read," said the Parisian, pointing to his passport. "Read, young man: 'Travelling for politics and art.' It is written!"

"C Republic!" muttered Hoffmann.

"So confess, young friend of liberty," said his protector.

"That would be taking credit for an idea that never occurred to me," replied Hoffmann. "I don't care for false glory. No, the box I had at Strasburg, which will arrive by carrier, contains only a violin, a box of colors, and some rolls of canvas."

Those words caused a great diminution in the esteem which some of those present had conceived for Hoffmann. They gave him back his papers. They drank

bumpers with him, but they ceased to look upon him as the saviour of enslaved nations.

One of the patriots went so far as to remark, —

"He looks like Saint-Just, but I prefer Saint-Just."

Hoffmann, once more buried in his reverie, which the heat of the stove, the tobacco, and the Burgundy tended to deepen, sat for some time without speaking. But suddenly he raised his head.

"Is the guillotine doing a good deal of work here?" he asked.

"Pretty well, pretty well. It 's fallen off a little since the Brissotins, but still it 's very satisfactory."

"Do you know where I can find comfortable lodgings, my friends?"

"Anywhere."

"But where I can see everything."

"Ah! in that case you must find a place in the neighborhood of Quai aux Fleurs."

"Very good."

"Do you know where Quai aux Fleurs is?"

"No, but the word *fleurs* [flowers] pleases me. I fancy myself already installed on Quai aux Fleurs. How do I get there?"

"You must go straight down Rue d'Enfer, and you 'll get to the quay."

"Quay, that means that it 's on the water!" said Hoffmann.

"Exactly."

"And that water is the Seine?"

"The Seine."

"So the Quai aux Fleurs is on the Seine, is it?"

"You know Paris better than I do, Citizen German."

"Thanks. Farewell. May I go in?"

"You have one more little formality to comply with."

"What is that?"

"You must go to the commissioner of police and get from him a permit to stay in the city."

"Very good! Farewell."

"Wait a moment. With that permit from the commissioner you must go to the police."

"Oho!"

"And give the address of your lodgings."

"Very good! is that all?"

"No; you must go to the headquarters of the section."

"What for?"

"To satisfy the authorities as to your means of subsistence."

"I will do all that; and will that be all?"

"Not yet. You will have to show your patriotism by gifts."

"Willingly."

"And take an oath of hatred to all French and foreign tyrants."

"With all my heart. Thanks for your valuable information."

"And then you must n't forget to write your full name legibly on a placard and hang it at your door."

"That shall be done."

"Go now, citizen, you annoy us."

The bottles were empty.

"Farewell, citizens. Many thanks for your courtesy."

And Hoffmann took his leave, still accompanied by his pipe, which was burning more fiercely than ever.

That is how he made his entry into the capital of republican France.

The fascinating phrase, "Quai aux Fleurs," had made his mouth water. He saw in his mind's eye a little

room with a balcony, looking on that marvellous Quai aux Fleurs.

He forgot December and the north winds. He forgot the snow and the temporary death of all nature. The flowers bloomed in his imagination under the smoke that poured from his lips. He saw nothing but jasmine and roses, despite the filthy streets of the faubourg.

As the clock struck nine, he reached Quai aux Fleurs, which was as utterly dark and deserted as all the northern quays are in winter. But that evening the solitude was darker and more noticeable there than anywhere.

Hoffmann was too hungry and too cold to philosophize in the open air; but there was no public house on the quay.

Raising his eyes, he discovered at last, on the corner of the quay and Rue de la Barillerie, a common red lantern, within which a dirty wick flickered dimly.

That beacon light swung back and forth at the end of an iron bracket, very well adapted for the suspension of a political foe in those days of tumult.

Hoffmann saw these words in green letters on the red glass: —

"Rooms to let. — Furnished Bedrooms and Cabinets."

He knocked sharply at a hall door. The door opened; the traveller entered, feeling his way.

"Shut your door," cried a harsh voice.

And a huge dog barked, as if to say, —

"Look out for your legs!"

Having agreed as to terms with a landlady of not unattractive aspect, and having selected his room, Hoffmann found himself in possession of a space fifteen feet by eight, forming a bedroom and study in one, at a

rent of thirty sous per day, payable every morning when he rose.

Hoffmann was in such high spirits that he paid for a fortnight in advance, for fear that some one might undertake to deprive him of his precious lodgings.

That done, he went to bed between sheets that were decidedly damp; but any bed is a bed to a traveller of eighteen. And then, too, how could he be exacting when he had the good fortune to lodge on Quai aux Fleurs?

Moreover Hoffmann invoked the memory of Antonia, and is not the place where one invokes the angels always paradise?

VIII.

HOW THE MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES WERE CLOSED, BUT PLACE DE LA RÉVOLUTION WAS OPEN.

THE room which was destined to be Hoffmann's terrestrial paradise for a fortnight contained a bed, as we know, a table, and two chairs.

It had a mantel-piece embellished with two blue glass vases filled with artificial flowers. A figure of Liberty in sugar posed beneath a crystal bell in which its tricolored flag and red cap were reflected.

A copper chandelier, a corner-piece in old rosewood, a twelfth century tapestry for a curtain, — such was the furniture of the apartment as disclosed by the first rays of dawn.

The tapestry represented Orpheus playing the violin to win back Eurydice, and the violin naturally recalled Zacharias Werner to Hoffmann's memory.

"Dear friend," mused our traveller, "he is in Paris, and so am I. We are together, and I shall see him to-day or to-morrow at latest. Where shall I begin? How must I set to work in order not to waste any of the good Lord's time and to see everything in France? For several days past I have seen nothing but living pictures, and very ugly ones at that. Let 's go to the ex-tyrant's Louvre. There I shall see all the fine pictures he had, the Rubens, the Poussins. Let 's be off at once."

He rose and went to the window, to examine first the panoramic tableau of his neighborhood.

A dull, gray sky, black mud under white trees, people running busily hither and thither, and a noise like the murmur of running water. That is all he discovered.

There was but little that was suggestive of flowers. Hoffmann closed his window, breakfasted, and went out, proposing first of all to see his friend Zacharias Werner.

But, as he was on the point of starting, he remembered that Werner had never given him his address, without which it would be somewhat difficult to find him.

That was no small disappointment to Hoffmann. But in a moment he said to himself, —

"Fool that I am! Zacharias loves the same things that I do. I long to see fine paintings. He must have had the same longing. I shall find him or some trace of him at the Louvre. Let us go to the Louvre."

He could see the Louvre from the parapet of the quay, so he bent his steps in the direction of the pile.

But he was grieved to learn at the door that the French, since they had been free, did not choose to debase themselves by looking at paintings of slaves, and that, assuming, which was not probable, that the Commune of Paris had not already burned up all the daubs to feed the fires in the manufactories of weapons of war, they would take care to use all that oil to feed the rats that were destined to furnish the patriots with food when the Prussians should lay siege to Paris.

Hoffmann felt the perspiration start on his forehead. The man who spoke thus to him had a certain manner of speaking that betrayed his importance.

The eloquent orator was much applauded.

Hoffmann learned from one of the bystanders that he had the honor of speaking to Citizen Simon, governor of the *children of France* and curator of the royal museums.

"I shall not see any pictures," he said with a sigh. "Ah me! it 's a great pity! But I will go to the late king's Library, and, in lieu of pictures, I shall see there engravings, medals, and manuscripts. I shall see the tomb of Childeric, Clovis' father, and Père Coronelli's celestial and terrestrial globes."

But Hoffmann, when he reached the Library, was pained to learn that the French nation, looking upon science and literature as a source of corruption and bad citizenship, had closed all the places of resort of pretended scholars and pretended men of letters, from motives of humanity, and to save themselves the trouble of guillotining the poor devils. Moreover, even under the tyrant, the Library was open only twice a week.

Hoffmann was obliged to retire without seeing anything. He even forgot to ask for news of his friend Zacharias.

But, as he was a persevering youth, he persisted in his efforts, and tried to gain admission to the Sainte-Avoye Museum. He was informed that the proprietor had been guillotined two days before.

He went as far as the Luxembourg; but that palace had become a prison.

His strength and his courage being alike exhausted, he retraced his steps toward his hotel, to rest his weary legs a little, to dream of Antonia and Zacharias, and to smoke a two hours' pipe in solitude.

But, marvel of marvels! That same Quai aux Fleurs, recently so peaceful, so deserted, was black

with a multitude of people, rushing about and shouting discordantly.

Hoffmann, who was not tall, could see nothing over the shoulders of all those people. He made haste to force his way through the crowd with his sharp elbows, and to return to his room.

He stationed himself at his window.

All eyes were at once turned upon him, and he was embarrassed for a moment, for he noticed how few windows were open. However, the curiosity of the crowd was soon directed to some other point than Hoffmann's window, and the young man himself did as the others did, and looked at the porch of a great black building with pointed roofs, and a belfry at the top of a large square tower.

He summoned the landlady.

"Citizeness," he said, "what is that building, pray?"

"The Palais, citizen."

"What do they do at the Palais?"

"They try people at the Palais de Justice, citizen."

"I thought there were no courts now."

"Oh! yes, there 's the Revolutionary Tribunal."

"Ah! true — and all these good people?"

"Are waiting for the arrival of the tumbrils."

"What? the tumbrils? I don't quite understand. Excuse me, I am a foreigner."

"The tumbrils, citizen, are just the same as hearses for dead people."

"Ah! Gott im Himmel!"

"Yes; in the morning the prisoners arrive who are to be tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal."

"I see."

"At four o'clock the prisoners are all tried, and they

pack them in the tumbrils that Citizen Fouquier has ordered for that purpose."

"Who is Citizen Fouquier?"

"The public prosecutor."

"Very well, and then?"

"Then the tumbrils go at a slow trot to Place de la Révolution, where the guillotine stands all the time."

"Really!"

"What! you have been out and you did n't go to see the guillotine? That 's the first thing strangers go to see when they arrive. It seems that we French are the only people who have guillotines."

"I congratulate you, madame."

"Say citizeness."

"I beg your pardon."

"Look, the tumbrils are coming — "

"You are going, citizeness?"

"Yes, I no longer like to see it."

And the landlady moved away.

Hoffmann laid his hand gently on her arm.

"Excuse me if I ask you one question," he said.

"Ask it."

"Why do you say you *no longer* like to see it? For my part, I should have said, 'I *do not* like to see it.'"

"This is how it is, citizen. At first they guillotined wicked aristocrats, it seems. Those people carried their heads so high, and they all had such an insolent, insulting way about them that pity did n't moisten our eyes very readily. So we looked on willingly enough. It was a fine sight to see the struggle of those bold enemies of the nation against death. But one day I saw an old man on the tumbril with his head jolting against the slats. It was a sad sight. The next day I saw some nuns. Another day I saw a child of fourteen, and last

of all I saw a girl in one tumbril and her mother in another, and the two poor creatures throwing kisses to each other without a word. They were so pale, their expression was so sad, the smile on their lips so ghastly, the fingers, which were the only part of them that moved as they took the kisses from their mouths, were so white and trembled so, that I shall never forget the horrid sight, and I have sworn never to run the risk of seeing such another."

"Oho!" said Hoffmann, moving away from the window, "do they do such things as that?"

"Yes, citizen. Why, what are you doing?"

"Closing the window."

"What for?"

"So as not to see."

"You! a man!"

"You see, citizeness, I came to Paris to study art and to breathe the air of liberty. Now, if I should have the ill-fortune to see such a sight as you just described, if I should see a young girl or a woman being dragged to her death, although longing to live, I should think of my sweetheart, citizeness, whom I love dearly, and who perhaps — no, citizeness, I will stay no longer in this room. Have n't you one on the back of the house?"

"Hush! foolish man, you speak too loud. Suppose my officials should hear you?"

"Your officials! what do you mean by officials?"

"It 's the republican name for servant."

"Well! if your servants should hear me, what would happen?"

"It would happen that, three or four days hence, I might see you from this window, in one of the tumbrils, at half-past four in the afternoon."

Having uttered these words in a mysterious tone, the good woman ran hastily downstairs, and Hoffmann followed her.

He glided out of the house, resolved to do anything to avoid the popular spectacle.

When he was at the corner of the quay, the sabres of the gendarmes gleamed in the air; there was a movement in the crowd; the dense masses of people roared and began to run.

Hoffmann made his way at full speed to Rue Saint-Denis, and ran along that thoroughfare like a madman. He doubled on his tracks through various narrow streets, like a hare, and disappeared in the labyrinth of passages that run in all directions between Quai de la Ferraille and the markets.

He breathed freely at last, when he found himself on Rue de la Ferrourerie, where, with the keen insight of the poet and painter, he identified the spot made famous by the assassination of Henri IV.

From there he went on, looking about him in every direction, until he reached Rue Saint-Honoré. The shops were closed wherever he went. Hoffmann wondered at the tranquillity of the quarter. Not only were the shops closed, but the windows of certain houses were hermetically sealed, as if they had received a signal.

That state of things was soon explained to Hoffmann's satisfaction. He saw the cabs turn and take to the side streets. He heard the galloping of horses, and recognized the gendarmes; and behind them, in the evening mist, he saw a confused, ghastly hubbub of rags, arms waving in the air, pikes brandishing, and flaming eyes.

And above it all, a tumbril.

Issuing from that whirlwind, which burst upon him before he could fly or conceal himself, Hoffmann heard

such ear-piercing, piteous shrieks as never had fallen upon his ears until that evening.

On the tumbril was a woman dressed in white. Those shrieks issued from the lips, the soul, the whole distracted body of that woman.

Hoffmann felt his legs give way under him. Those piteous shrieks had deprived his nerves of all their force. He sank upon a stone, with his head resting against the shutters of a shop, which had been closed so hurriedly that they were still partly ajar.

The tumbril arrived opposite him, with its escort of bandits and hideous women, its usual satellites; but, strangely enough, all those dregs did not effervesce, all those reptiles made no sound. The victim alone writhed in the arms of two men, and called frantically upon heaven and earth, upon men and things.

Suddenly Hoffmann heard, through the chink in the shutters, these words pronounced in a sad tone by a sympathetic, youthful voice, —

"Poor Du Barry! so you have come to this!"

"Madame du Barry!" cried Hoffmann. "Is it she, is that she passing on the tumbril?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the low, pitying voice in the traveller's ear, so close that he felt his interlocutor's hot breath between the boards.

Poor Du Barry was standing erect, clinging to the moving side of the tumbril. Her chestnut hair, the pride of her beauty, had been cut at the neck, but fell around the temples in long locks drenched with sweat. Lovely still, with her great, haggard eyes, her little mouth, — too small for the frightful outcry she was making, — the unhappy woman shook her head convulsively from time to time to throw aside the hair that covered her face.

When she passed the stone on which Hoffmann had fallen, she cried, "Help! save me! I have done no harm! help!" and she nearly overturned the executioner's assistant who was holding her.

That cry of "Help!" she did not cease to utter amid the profound silence of the multitude. Those furies, who were in the habit of heaping insults upon the victims who went bravely to their death, were touched by the irresistible outburst of a woman's terror. They felt that their outcries would not have succeeded in drowning the groans of that fever which bordered upon madness, and was sublime in its very horror.

Hoffmann rose, no longer conscious of a heart within his breast. He began to run after the tumbril with the rest, one more ghost added to the procession of spectres that formed the last escort of a king's favorite.

Madame du Barry noticed him and shrieked, —

"Life! life! I give all I own to the nation! Monsieur! Save me!"

"She spoke to me!" thought the young man. "Poor woman, whose glances were once valued so high, whose words were priceless treasures, she spoke to me!"

He halted. The tumbril had reached Place de la Révolution. In the darkness, increased by a cold rain, Hoffmann could see naught but two shadows: one, all white, was that of the victim; the other, red, of the scaffold.

He saw the executioners drag the white dress up the ladder. He saw that struggling form straighten itself out to resist, then suddenly, amid her piercing shrieks, the poor woman lost her balance and fell on the block.

Hoffmann heard her cry: "Mercy, Monsieur le Bourreau![1] Just one moment more, Monsieur le

[1] Executioner.

Bourreau!" And that was all. The knife fell with a sinister flash.

Hoffmann fell backward into the ditch that surrounded the square.

It was a fine picture for an artist who had come to France in search of impressions and ideas. God had allowed him to witness the too cruel punishment of the woman who had helped to destroy the monarchy.

La du Barry's cowardly death seemed to him to absolve the poor creature. She could never have had any pride, since she did not even know how to die! To know how to die, alas! in those days, was the supreme virtue of those who had never known vice.

Hoffmann reflected that, if he had come to Paris to see extraordinary things, his journey was not a failure.

Somewhat comforted by the philosophy of history, he said to himself, —

"There is still the theatre. Let us go to the theatre. I am well aware that, after the actress I have just seen, those who act in ordinary tragedy or opera will have no effect on me, but I will be indulgent. One must not ask too much of women who die of laughing only. But I will try and remember that square so that I may never go there again while I live."

IX.

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS.

HOFFMANN was a man of sudden transitions. After Place de la Révolution and the tumultuous mob gathered about a scaffold, the gloomy sky and the blood, he must needs have the glare of many candles, the joyous multitude, flowers, in a word, life. He was not sure that he could by that means banish the memory of the sight he had just witnessed, but he was determined at all events to give his eyes a change of scene and to satisfy himself that there were still people in the world who lived and laughed.

He bent his steps toward the Opéra therefore; but he arrived there without knowing how he arrived. His resolution walked in front, and he followed it as a blind man follows his dog, while his mind travelled in an opposite direction, among sights and sounds of a very different nature.

As on Place de la Révolution, there was a crowd on the boulevard where the home of the Opera then was, on the present site of the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin.

Hoffmann stopped on the outskirts of the crowd and looked at the poster.

They were playing the "Judgment of Paris," a ballet-pantomime in three acts, by Monsieur Gardel the younger, a son of Marie-Antoinette's dancing-master, and at a later period master of ballets to the emperor.

"The 'Judgment of Paris,'" muttered the poet, gazing fixedly at the poster, as if to engrave in his mind, with the aid of his eyes and ears, the meaning of those three words, the "Judgment of Paris."

But to no purpose did he repeat the syllables composing the title of the ballet. They seemed to him utterly devoid of meaning, so hard was it for his mind to cast out the terrible memories with which it was filled, to make room for the work borrowed by Monsieur Gardel the younger from Homer's "Iliad."

What a strange epoch was that when one could see a condemnation in the morning, an execution in the afternoon, and ballet-dancing in the evening, all in the same day, and when one ran the risk of being arrested one's self upon recovering from all that excitement!

Hoffmann realized that unless somebody else told him what the play was to be, he should never succeed in finding out, and that he might perhaps go mad before that poster.

So he walked up to a stout gentleman who was standing in the line with his wife, — for in all time stout men have had a mania for standing in line with their wives, — and said to him, —

"What do they play this evening, monsieur?"

"You can see on the poster, monsieur," the stout man replied; "the 'Judgment of Paris.'"

"The Judgment of Paris," Hoffmann repeated. "Oh, yes, the Judgment of Paris; I know what that is."

The stout man looked at his strange questioner and shrugged his shoulders with a gesture expressive of the most profound contempt for this young man, who, in those ultra-mythological days, could have forgotten for an instant what the judgment of Paris was.

"Would you like an explanation of the ballet, citizen?" said a dealer in libretti, approaching Hoffmann.

"Yes, give me one!"

It was an additional proof to our hero that he was really going to the play, and he needed it.

He opened the book and glanced over its contents.

It was daintily printed on fine white paper and enriched by a preface by the author.

"What a marvellous thing man is!" thought Hoffmann, looking over the few lines of the preface, which he had not as yet read, but which he proposed to read; "and how he marches on alone, selfish and indifferent, along the pathway of his own interests and ambitions, while forming a part of the common mass of mankind! For instance, here is a man, this Monsieur Gardel the younger, who produced this ballet on March 5, 1793, that is to say, six weeks after the king's death, — six weeks after one of the most momentous events in the world's history; and on the day when this ballet was produced, he had private emotions of his own, distinct from the general emotion. His heart beat fast when his work was applauded; and if, at that moment, somebody had spoken to him of the event which still thrilled the world, and had mentioned King Louis XVI., he would have exclaimed: 'Louis XVI., who is he?' And then, as if, from the day when he put his ballet before the public, the whole world could have no other subject in its mind than that choregraphic event, he wrote a preface in explanation of his pantomime. Well, well! let us read his little preface. I will see if, dismissing from my mind the date when it was written, I find in it any trace of the circumstances amid which it first saw the light."

Hoffmann leaned upon the railing of the theatre, and this is what he read: —

"I have always noticed in ballet-pantomimes that scenic effects and varied and pleasing *divertissements* are what most attract the public and obtain the most enthusiastic applause."

"I must confess that that 's a very interesting discovery," thought Hoffmann, unable to repress a smile at that first display of ingenuousness. "What! he really has noticed that the points that attract the public in ballets are scenic effects and varied and pleasing *divertissements!* How polite he is to Messieurs Haydn, Pleyel, and Méhul, who wrote the music for the 'Judgment of Paris!'" Let us see what else he says."

"In accordance with that observation, I sought a subject which could be so treated as to display the great talents in the matter of dancing which the Paris Opera alone possesses, and which would at the same time permit me to carry out such ideas as chance might suggest to me. Poetic history is the inexhaustible soil which the master of the ballet should cultivate. It is not without thorns; but one must know how to put them aside in order to pluck the rose."

"Well! upon my word! there 's a sentence to be put in a golden frame!" cried Hoffmann. "Such things are written nowhere but in France."

He looked down at the book once more, intending to continue the perusal of those interesting aphorisms which were beginning to cheer him up a little; but his mind, momentarily diverted from its real preoccupation, gradually returned to it. The letters became confused under the dreamer's eyes. He let fall the hand that held the "Judgment of Paris," fixed his eyes on the ground and muttered, —

"Poor woman!"

The ghost of Madame du Barry again passed through his memory.

Thereupon he shook his head as if to banish from it the gloomy realities of the present, purchased his ticket, and entered the theatre.

The great hall was full, and resplendent with flowers, jewels, silks, and bare shoulders. A loud, incessant hum, — the hum of perfumed women, of trivial words, like the noise that thousands of flies would make in a paper box, and consisting principally of remarks that leave the same trace on the mind that a butterfly's wings leave on the finger of a child who catches it, and, two minutes later, not knowing what to do with it, throws up his hand and restores its liberty.

Hoffmann took a seat in the orchestra, and under the influence of the glowing atmosphere of the place, he succeeded in believing for a moment that he had been there since morning, and that the sorowful scene he had witnessed was a nightmare and not reality. Thereupon his memory, like every man's memory, which has two reflectors, one in the heart and the other in the mind, turned back insensibly, as a natural result of more cheerful impressions, toward the gentle maiden he had left behind him, whose portrait he could feel beating like another heart against his own heart. He looked at all the women who surrounded him, all those white shoulders, all those masses of light or dark hair, all those graceful arms, all those hands playing with the sticks of a fan or coquettishly arranging the flowers in a head-dress, and he smiled to himself as he uttered Antonia's name, as if that name were sufficient to banish any thought of comparison between her who bore it and all those other women, and to transport him to a world

of memories immeasurably more charming than all those real forms, however beautiful they might be. Then, as if that were not enough, as if he were afraid that the portrait, which his mind conjured up across the space that lay between them, might be effaced in the ideal form in which it appeared to him, Hoffmann softly slipped his hand into his breast, grasped the locket as a timid girl grasps a bird in its nest, and, after making sure that no one could see him and defile with a glance the lovely image he held in his hand, he softly took out the young girl's portrait, held it up before his eyes, worshipped it for a moment with his glance, and, after putting it devoutly to his lips, concealed it once more over his heart. Nor could anybody divine the joy that filled the heart of the young man with the black hair and pale complexion as a result of what seemed to be no more than the simple motion of putting his hand into his waistcoat.

At that moment the signal was given, and the first notes of the overture ran gayly through the orchestra, like finches quarrelling in a thicket.

Hoffmann sat down and opened both ears to the music, trying to become once more a man like those about him, that is to say, an attentive spectator.

But after five minutes he ceased to listen, and no longer cared to hear. That was not the sort of music to fix Hoffmann's wandering attention, especially as he heard it twice over, for a neighbor, who was doubtless an habitué of the Opera and an admirer of Messrs. Haydn, Pleyel, and Méhul, accompanied the melodies of those gentlemen with perfect accuracy in a sort of falsetto undertone. In addition to that accompaniment with his mouth, he accompanied the music with his fingers, tapping his long tapering nails, in perfect time and with

fascinating dexterity, on the snuffbox he held in his hand.

Hoffmann, with the instinctive curiosity which is naturally the most prominent characteristic of all observing minds, examined with interest this personage who constituted himself, so to speak, a private orchestra grafted on the general orchestra.

In very truth he well deserved to be examined.

Imagine a small man wearing a black coat, waistcoat, and breeches, white shirt and cravat, of a whiteness that was more than white and almost as fatiguing to the eyes as the silvery reflection of snow. Cover half of this small man's hands, — thin hands, transparent as wax, which stood out against the black cloth as if they were lighted within, — cover them with ruffles of fine linen pleated with the greatest care and flexible as the leaves of the lily, and you will have an idea of the whole of the body. Now look at the head, and look at it as Hoffmann did, with curiosity mingled with amazement. Imagine a face oval in shape, the brow polished like ivory, sparse, yellow hair, growing here and there like clumps of bushes in a field. Suppress the eyebrows, and below the places where they should be, put two holes and in them a pair of eyes as cold as glass, almost always staring into vacancy, and the more easily believed to be inanimate, because you would look in vain therein for the luminous point which God placed in the eye as a spark on the hearth of life. Those blue eyes are like sapphires, neither gentle nor stern. They see, to be sure, but they do not look. A long, thin, pointed nose, a small mouth, with lips half-opened, showing teeth that are not white but of the same waxen shade as the skin, as if they had received a slight infiltration of pale blood and had retained a tinge of it, a pointed chin,

shaved with the greatest care, protruding cheek-bones, — cheeks in which there are holes large enough to hold a walnut, — such were the characteristic features of the spectator who sat beside Hoffmann.

He might have been fifty years old or thirty. If he had been eighty it would have been in no wise extraordinary. If he had been only twelve it would not have seemed improbable. It seemed as if he must have come into the world as he then was. He had certainly never been any younger, and it was possible that he might have looked older. It seemed as if, upon touching his skin, you would have had the same sensation of cold as upon touching the skin of a serpent or a dead body.

But he certainly loved music.

From time to time his lips parted a little more under the impulse of sensuous enjoyment, and three little folds, exactly alike on both sides, described a semicircle from the corners of his mouth and remained there for five minutes, then gradually faded away like the circles made by a stone falling into the water, which spread out farther and farther until they are no longer distinguishable on the surface.

Hoffmann did not weary of gazing at this man, who felt that he was being examined, but gave no outward indication of the feeling. He sat so perfectly still that our poet, who had in his mind at that time the seed of the fancy that was to give birth to "Coppelius," rested his hands on the back of the seat in front, leaned forward, and turned his head to the right, trying to obtain a full-face view of him whose profile only he had seen thus far.

The little man looked at Hoffmann without surprise, smiled upon him, nodded his head amicably, kept his

eyes fixed upon the same point, invisible to everybody but himself, and continued to accompany the orchestra.

"It 's strange!" said Hoffmann, sitting back in his chair, "I would have bet that he was n't alive."

And as if, although he had seen his neighbor move his head, he was not thoroughly convinced that the rest of his body was alive, he looked again at his hands. He was then struck by the fact that the snuffbox with which those hands were toying, an ebony snuffbox, was embellished with a small death's head in diamonds.

Everything seemed fated, on that day, to assume a fantastic shape in Hoffmann's eyes; but he was determined to gain his end, so he leaned forward as he had done before, and fixed his eyes upon the snuffbox at such close quarters that his lips almost touched the hand that held it.

The owner, seeing that his snuffbox was an object of such engrossing interest to his neighbor, silently passed it to him, so that he might examine it at his leisure.

Hoffmann took it, turned it over and over twenty times, and at last opened it.

There was snuff inside!

X.

ARSÈNE.

HAVING examined the snuffbox with the utmost attention, Hoffmann restored it to its owner, thanking him with a silent motion of the head to which the other replied with a motion as courteous, but, if such a thing were possible, even more silent.

"Now let us see if he will speak," said Hoffmann to himself; and he turned to his neighbor and said,—

"I beg you to pardon my presumption, monsieur, but that little death's head in diamonds on your snuffbox surprised me very much at first, for it 's an unusual ornament for that sort of thing."

"Indeed I believe it is the only one ever made," replied the stranger in a metallic voice, whose tones resembled the sound made by striking silver coins together. "It came into my hands from some grateful heirs, whose father I attended."

"You are a physician?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And did you cure the father of those young people?"

"On the other hand, monsieur, we had the misfortune to lose him."

"I understand their gratitude."

The physician began to laugh.

His replies did not interrupt his humming, and he was still humming as he said,—

"Yes, I believe I killed that old man."

"How did you kill him?"

"I tried a new remedy on him. *Mon Dieu!* in an hour he was dead. Really it's very amusing."

He continued to hum.

"You seem fond of music, monsieur?" queried Hoffmann.

"Yes, monsieur; especially this."

"The devil!" thought Hoffmann, "this fellow goes astray in music as well as in medicine."

At that moment the curtain rose.

The strange doctor took a pinch of snuff and settled himself as comfortably as possible in his stall, like a man who proposes to lose no part of the spectacle he is about to witness.

Meanwhile he said to Hoffmann, as if upon reflection, —

"You are a German, monsieur?"

"I am."

"I recognized your nationality by your accent. A fine country, but a wretched accent."

Hoffmann bowed in response to that half-complimentary, half-critical remark.

"You have come to France — what for?"

"To see."

"And what have you seen thus far?"

"I have seen a guillotining, monsieur."

"Were you on Place de la Révolution to-day?"

"I was."

"Then you were a witness of Madame du Barry's death?"

"Yes," said Hoffmann with a sigh.

"I knew her well," continued the doctor in a confidential tone, and so emphasizing the word *knew* as to impart to it its fullest signification. "She was a lovely girl, on my word!"

"Did you attend her too?"

"No, but I attended her negro boy, Zamore."

"The wretch! I was told that it was he who denounced his mistress."

"The little negro was an ardent patriot, I tell you!"

"You would have done well to do with him as you did with the old man, — you know, the old man of the snuff box."

"What was the use? he had no heirs."

And the doctor laughed again.

"Were you present at the execution yourself, monsieur?" said Hoffmann, who felt an irresistible desire to speak of the poor creature, whose bleeding image haunted him.

"No. Had she grown thin?"

"Who?"

"The countess."

"I can't tell you, monsieur."

"Why not?"

"Because I saw her for the first time on the tumbril."

"I am sorry for that. I would have liked to know, for she was very plump when I knew her; but I will go and see her body to-morrow. Ah! see, look at that."

The doctor pointed to the stage where at that moment Monsieur Vestris, who was playing the part of Paris, appeared on Mount Ida and went through all sorts of antics with the nymph Œnone.

Hoffmann glanced at what his neighbor pointed out to him; but, after assuring himself that the sombre-faced physician was really paying close attention to the pantomime, and that what he had heard and said had left no trace on his mind, he said to himself, —

"It would be interesting to see this fellow weep."

"Do you know the subject of the play?" the doctor continued after a silence of a few moments.

"No, monsieur."

"It 's very interesting. Indeed, there are some touching situations in it. A friend of mine and myself had tears in our eyes the other night."

"A friend of his!" muttered the poet; "what sort of a creature can a friend of this man's be? He must be a grave-digger."

"Ah! bravo! bravo! Vestris," shouted the little man, clapping his hands.

The physician had selected for this manifestation of his admiration the moment when Paris, as the book Hoffmann had purchased at the door informed him, seized his spear and flew to the succor of certain shepherds who were running in terror from a terrible lion.

I am not over-curious, but I would have liked to see the lion.

So ended the first act.

Thereupon the doctor stood up, turned about, leaned against the back of the stall in front of his, and, substituting a little opera-glass for his snuff box, began to inspect the women in the audience.

Hoffmann mechanically followed the direction of the opera-glass and noticed with amazement that every person upon whom it rested instantly started and turned her eyes toward the man who was looking at her, exactly as if she were constrained to do it by some invisible force. And she would remain in that position until the doctor turned his glass away.

"Did that opera-glass come to you from anybody's heir, monsieur?" queried Hoffmann.

"No, it came from Monsieur de Voltaire."

"Did you know him too?"

"Well; we were very intimate."

"Were you his physician?"

"He did not believe in medicine. To be sure, he did n't believe in much of anything."

"Is it true that he died while he was confessing?"

"He, monsieur! Arouet! nonsense! not only did he not confess, but he gave the priest who came to attend him a warm welcome. I can tell you all about it, for I was there."

"What happened, pray?"

'Arouet was dying. Tersac, his curé, appeared and said to him first of all, like a man who has no time to waste, 'Monsieur, do you believe in the trinity of Jesus Christ?'

"'Leave me in peace, monsieur, I beg you,' replied Voltaire.

"'But, monsieur,' continued Tersac, 'it is important that I should know whether you recognize Jesus Christ as the son of God.'

"'In the devil's name!' cried Voltaire, 'don't mention that man to me again!' And summoning what little strength he still had, he struck the curé a blow in the face, and died. How I laughed! *Mon Dieu!* how I laughed!"

"It was laughable," said Hoffmann in a disdainful tone; "and that was just the way that the author of 'La Pucelle' should die."

"Ah! yes, 'La Pucelle!' cried the man in black. "What a masterpiece, monsieur! What an admirable piece of work! I know but one book that can be compared with it."

"What is that?"

"'Justine,' by Monsieur de Sade. "Do you know 'Justine'?"

"No, monsieur."

"And the Marquis de Sade?"

"No better."

"You see, monsieur" continued the doctor enthusiastically, "Justine is the most immoral book imaginable. It is Crebillon *fils* naked. It is wonderful. I attended a girl who read it."

"And did she die like your old man?"

"Yes, monsieur, but she died very happy."

And the doctor's eyes snapped at the reminiscence.

The signal was given for the second act. Hoffmann was not sorry, for his neighbor terrified him.

"Ah!" said the doctor, resuming his seat with a smile of satisfaction, "now we shall see Arsène."

"Who is Arsène?"

"Don't you know her?"

"No, monsieur."

"The devil! Don't you know anything at all, young man? Arsène is Arsène, that's the whole story. Besides you will soon see her."

And before the orchestra played a note the doctor began to hum the introduction to the second act.

The curtain rose.

The stage represented *a bower of flowers and greenery through which flowed a stream from a spring at the foot of a cliff.*

Hoffmann buried his face in his hands. Most assuredly, what he saw and heard was not powerful enough to divert his mind from the painful thoughts and ghastly memory that had led him thither.

"What difference would it have made," he thought, recurring suddenly to the impressions of the day, "what difference under heaven would it have made, if they had let that wretched woman live? What harm would

it have done if that heart had continued to beat, that mouth to breathe? What misfortune would have happened? Why so suddenly put a stop to it all? By what right do they arrest life in its prime? She would be at home among all these women, whereas at this moment her poor body, the body that was beloved by a king, is lying in the mud of a cemetery, headless, without flowers, without a cross to mark her grave. My God, how she shrieked! how she shrieked! and then all of a sudden — "

Again he hid his face in his hands.

"What am I doing here?" he said to himself. "Ah! I will go away."

And perhaps he was really on the point of going away, when, as he raised his head, he saw on the stage a danseuse who did not appear in the first act, and whom the whole audience were watching as she danced, spellbound and breathless.

"Oh! how beautiful that woman is!" cried Hoffmann, loud enough for his neighbors and the danseuse herself to hear him.

The woman who had called forth that sudden admiration looked down at the young man who had involuntarily uttered the exclamation, and Hoffmann thought that she thanked him with a glance.

He blushed and started as if he had received an electric shock.

Arsène, for Arsène it was, — that is to say, the danseuse whose name the little old man had mentioned, — was really a beautiful creature, and her beauty had none of the characteristics of ordinary, traditional beauty.

She was tall, admirably built, and of a transparent pallor under the rouge with which her cheeks were covered. Her feet were very small, and when she

alighted on the stage you would have said that her toes rested on a cloud, for there was not the slightest sound. Her figure was so slight, so flexible, that no snake could have twisted itself about as she did. Every time that she straightened herself up and leaned backward, you would have thought that her corsets would burst, and the vigor of her dancing and the assured poise of her body enabled one to divine that she was perfectly well aware of her flawless beauty, and that she possessed an ardent nature which, like Messalina's of old, might sometimes be fatigued but never surfeited. She did not smile as dancers commonly smile; her ruddy lips almost never parted; not that they concealed ugly teeth, oh! no, for when she bestowed a smile upon Hoffmann at the moment when he so artlessly expressed his admiration aloud, our poet caught a glimpse of a double row of pearls, so white and regular, that it seemed that she must conceal them behind her lips so that the air should not mar them. In her hair, which was black and glossy, with a bluish sheen, were entwined large acanthus leaves and bunches of grapes, whose shadow played upon her bare shoulders. Her eyes were large and clear and brilliant, so brilliant that they lighted up everything about her, and if she had danced in the darkness, she would have illumined the place where she danced. Another circumstance that added to the originality of her appearance was that, without any apparent reason, she wore in her rôle of nymph, — for she was acting or rather dancing a nymph, — she wore, we say, a narrow black velvet necklace fastened by a clasp, or at all events by an object which seemed to be of the shape of a clasp, and which, being made of diamonds, cast a dazzling gleam.

The doctor was gazing at the woman with all his eyes,

and his soul — such soul as he might have — seemed to hang upon her movements. It was very plain that, as long as she danced, he did not breathe.

Thereupon Hoffmann noticed a curious fact. Whether she moved to right or left, backward or forward, Arsène's eyes never swerved from the line of the doctor's eyes, and there was a visible correlation between their glances. Furthermore Hoffmann distinctly saw the rays cast by the clasp of Arsène's neckband and those cast by the doctor's death's head meet half-way between them, collide and rebound, myriads of white, red, and golden sparks following the collision.

"Will you lend me your opera-glass, monsieur?" said Hoffmann, breathing hard and not turning his head, for it was impossible for him, too, to take his eyes from Arsène.

The doctor put out his hand toward Hoffmann without making the slightest movement of the head, so that their hands sought each other for some moments in space before they met.

Hoffmann seized the opera-glass at last and glued his eyes to it.

"It is strange," he muttered.

"What is strange?" demanded the doctor.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Hoffmann, who desired to give his whole attention to what he saw. In truth, what he saw was strange.

The opera-glass brought everything so close to his eyes that Hoffmann put out his hand two or three times, thinking that he could grasp Arsène, who no longer seemed to be at the end of the glass in which her image was reflected, but directly between the two barrels of the glass. Thus our German lost no detail of the dancer's beauty, and her glances, so penetrating even at

a distance, surrounded his brow with a circle of flame and made the blood boil in the veins at his temples. His heart made a terrible uproar in his breast.

"Who is that woman?" he asked in a faint voice, without taking the glass from his eyes, and without moving a muscle.

"It is Arsène, as I told you before," replied the doctor, whose lips alone seemed alive, and whose staring eyes were riveted on the dancer.

"She has a lover, of course?"

"Yes."

"Whom she loves?"

"So they say."

"Is he rich?"

"Very rich."

"Who is he?"

"Look at the lower proscenium box at your left."

"I can't turn my head."

"Make an effort."

Hoffmann made an effort, so painful that it extorted a cry from him, as if the chords in his neck had turned to marble and had broken at that moment.

He looked at the box mentioned by the doctor. In it there was but one man, but that man, crouching like a lion upon the velvet rail, seemed to fill it completely.

He was a man of thirty-two or thirty-three years, with a face seamed by passion. One would have said that a volcanic eruption rather than the smallpox had hollowed out the deep valley that crossed and recrossed on that upheaved flesh. His eyes were naturally small, but they were opened to an unnatural extent by internal convulsions. Sometimes they were empty and lifeless as an extinct crater; sometimes they shot flames like a crater in full eruption. He did not applaud by clap-

ping his hands, but by striking the railing, and he seemed to shake the building with every blow.

"Great heaven!" said Hoffmann, "is that a man?"

"Yes, yes, it's a man," replied the little man in black. "Yes, it's a man and a good deal of a man too."

"What's his name?"

"Don't you know him?"

"Why, no, I arrived only yesterday."

"Well, that is Danton."

"Danton!" exclaimed Hoffmann with a sudden start. "Oho! and he is Arsène's lover?"

"He is her lover."

"And he loves her, of course?"

"Madly. He is jealous to ferocity."

But, interesting as the sight of Danton was, Hoffmann had already turned his eyes back to Arsène, whose silent dance was a weird thing to see.

"One more question, monsieur."

"Say on."

"What is the shape of the clasp that holds her necklace?"

"It is a guillotine."

"A guillotine!"

"Yes. They make lovely ones now, and all our fashionable women wear at least one. Danton gave Arsène the one she wears."

"A guillotine, a guillotine at the neck of a ballet-dancer!" repeated Hoffmann, who felt that his brain was in a whirl. "A guillotine, why?"

And our German, who might well have been taken for a madman, stretched out his arms before him as if to seize something; for, by a strange optical delusion, the distance between Arsène and himself steadily diminished,

and it seemed to him that he could hear the hot breathing of that chest, whose bosoms, half uncovered, rose and fell as if under the embrace of pleasure. Hoffmann was in that state of excitement in which one feels as if he were breathing fire, and fears lest his emotions rend his body.

"Enough! enough!" he said.

But the dance continued, and the hallucination was so complete that Hoffmann's mind, dwelling upon the two strongest impressions of the day, confused the stage before him with Place de la Révolution, and sometimes he fancied that he saw Madame du Barry's headless body dancing in Arsène's place, and sometimes that Arsène came dancing to the foot of the guillotine and into the executioner's hands.

In the young man's excited imagination there was a medley of flowers and blood, of dancing and the death-agony, of life and death.

But over and above it all was the magnetic attraction that drew him toward the young woman. Every time that those two slender legs passed before his eyes, every time that those filmy skirts rose a little higher, a shudder ran through his whole frame, his lips became dry, his breath parched and hot, and desire seized upon him as it seizes upon a man of twenty.

In that condition of affairs Hoffmann had but one refuge, — Antonia's portrait, the locket that he wore upon his heart; to confront this sensual love with a pure and holy love, to appeal to chaste memories in face of this potent reality.

He seized the portrait and put it to his lips; but he had no sooner made the movement than he heard the shrill, sneering laugh of his neighbor who was looking at him with a mocking air.

"Let me go out," he cried. "Let me go out. I can remain here no longer!"

Like a madman he left the orchestra, treading on the feet and brushing against the legs of the tranquil spectators, who cursed and swore at the idiot who had the strange whim of going out in the middle of a ballet.

XI.

THE SECOND PERFORMANCE OF THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS.

But Hoffmann's impulse did not carry him very far. He stopped at the corner of Rue Saint-Martin.

He was gasping for breath; his forehead was bathed in perspiration.

He passed his left hand across his forehead, placed his right hand on his breast, and drew a long breath.

At that moment some one touched his shoulder. He jumped.

"*Pardieu!* it is himself!" said a voice.

He turned and uttered an exclamation.

It was his friend Zacharias Werner.

The two young men threw themselves into each other's arms.

Then these two questions crossed each other: —

"What are you doing here?"

"Where are you going?"

"I arrived yesterday," said Hoffmann. "I saw Madame du Barry guillotined, and I came to the Opéra for distraction."

"I arrived six months ago. For the last five months I have seen twenty to twenty-five persons guillotined every day, and I am going to play cards for distraction."

"Aha!"

"Will you come with me?"

"No, thanks."

"You are making a mistake, for I am in a lucky vein. With your usual good luck, you would make your fortune. You must have been horribly bored at the Opéra, accustomed as you are to real music. Come with me, and I 'll take you where you can hear some."

"Music?"

"Yes, the music of gold; and, in addition to that, all forms of pleasure are combined where I am going: charming women, a delicious supper, and terrific gambling!"

"Thanks, my friend, it 's impossible! I have promised; more than that, I have sworn."

"To whom?"

"Antonia."

"So you have seen her?"

"I love her, my friend, I adore her."

"Ah! I understand, that is what delayed you so; and you swore to her?"

"I swore to her not to gamble, and —"

Hoffmann hesitated.

"And what else?"

"And to remain true to her," he faltered.

"Then you must n't come to 113."

"What is 113?"

"It 's the house I mentioned just now. I have n't taken any oath myself, so I am off. Farewell, Theodor."

"Farewell, Zacharias."

And Werner hurried away while Hoffmann remained nailed to his place.

When Werner was a hundred yards away Hoffmann remembered that he had forgotten to ask his address, and that the only address he had given him was that of the gambling-house.

But that address was written in Hoffmann's mind as it was over the door of the fatal house itself, in letters of flame!

Meanwhile what had taken place had allayed Hoffmann's remorse to some extent. Human nature is thus constituted, always indulgent to itself, inasmuch as its indulgence is pure selfishness.

He had sacrificed the thirst for gambling to Antonia, and he thought that he had kept his oath, forgetting that it was because he was all ready to break the most important part of that oath, that he was standing at the corner of the boulevard and Rue Saint-Martin as if he were nailed there.

But, as I have said, his resistance in the case of Werner had made him indulgent in the matter of Arsène. He determined, therefore, to adopt a middle course, and, instead of returning to the theatre, — a step to which the demon of temptation urged him with all his strength, — to wait at the stage door and see her come out.

Hoffmann was too well acquainted with the topography of theatres not to find the stage door very soon. He discovered, on Rue de Bondy, a long passage-way very dimly lighted, damp and dirty, through which men in shabby garments passed like ghosts, and he knew at once that that was the door which gave ingress and egress to the poor creatures whom red and white and blue paint, gauze and silk and spangles, transformed into gods and goddesses.

The moments passed. Snow was falling, but Hoffmann was so excited by the strange apparition he had witnessed, in which there was a touch of the supernatural, that he did not feel the sensation of cold that seemed to afflict the passers-by. Vainly did he condense in

vapor that was almost tangible the breath that issued from his mouth. His hands were none the less burning hot and his brow moist with perspiration. Leaning against the wall, with his eyes riveted on the corridor, he stood perfectly motionless, so that the snow, which continued to fall more heavily, slowly covered him as with a shroud, and gradually transformed the student in his German cap and overcoat into a marble statue.

At last those who were first at liberty to depart began to emerge from the narrow passage, then the machinists, then all the nameless crew who live upon the theatre, then the male artists, who require less time for dressing than the women, then the women, and at last the fair danseuse, whom Hoffmann recognized not by her lovely face alone, but by that undulatory motion of the hips which was peculiar to her, and by the narrow velvet ribbon at her neck, upon which sparkled the strange jewel made fashionable by the Terror.

The instant that Arsène appeared in the doorway, and before Hoffmann had time to stir, a carriage drove up rapidly, the door was thrown open, and the girl jumped in as lightly as if she were still pirouetting on the stage. A form appeared through the window, and Hoffmann thought that he recognized the man of the proscenium box; that form received the beautiful nymph in its arms; then, without a word of direction to the coachman, the carriage drove away at a gallop.

All this that we have described in eighteen or twenty lines took place as rapidly as the lightning flashes.

Hoffmann uttered a sort of shriek as he saw the carriage drive away, stepped out from the wall like a statue leaving its niche, and shaking off the snow with which he was covered, darted in pursuit of the carriage.

But it was drawn by two powerful horses of such speed that it was impossible for the young man, however swift his reckless pace, to overtake them.

So long as the carriage followed the boulevard, all went well. So long as it followed Rue de Bourbon-Villeneuve, recently re-christened Rue Neuve-Égalité, all went well; but when it reached Place des Victoires, otherwise Place de la Victoire Nationale, it turned to the right and vanished from Hoffmann's sight.

Being no longer sustained by the sound of the wheels or the sight of the carriage, the young man's strength failed him. He stopped for a moment at the corner of Rue Neuve-Eustache, and leaned against the wall to recover his breath. Then, seeing and hearing nothing, he looked about, judging that it was time for him to return to his lodgings.

It was no simple matter for Hoffmann to extricate himself from the labyrinth of streets that form an almost inextricable network from Pointe Saint-Eustache to Quai de la Ferraille. However, thanks to the numerous patrols circulating through the streets, thanks to his satisfactory passport, and thanks to the ready proof afforded by the date of the visa at the barrier that he had arrived only the night before, he obtained from the citizen militia such precise directions that he succeeded in finding his hotel and his little room, where he locked himself in, alone to all appearance, but, in reality, accompanied by a vivid memory of what had taken place.

From that moment Hoffmann was haunted by two visions, one of which gradually faded away, while the other gradually became more and more vivid.

The vision that faded away was the pale, distorted face of La du Barry, as she was dragged from the

Conciergerie to the tumbril and from the tumbril to the scaffold.

The vision that assumed more and more reality was the bright and smiling countenance of the lovely dancer, as she skipped from the back of the stage to the footlights and whirled from the footlights to one side after the other.

Hoffmann did his utmost to banish that vision. He took his brushes from his box and painted. He took his violin from its case and played. He asked for pen and ink and wrote poetry. But the poetry that he wrote was in praise of Arsène. The air that he played was the air to which she appeared, and whose buoyant notes seemed to lift her as if they had had wings; and the sketches he made were portraits of her, with the same velvet necklace, the curious ornament fastened about Arsène's neck by such a curious clasp.

During all that night, during all the next day, during all the following night and day, Hoffmann saw but one thing or rather two things: on one side the bizarre danseuse, and on the other side the no less bizarre doctor. There was such a close affinity between the two that Hoffmann could not think of one without the other. And so, during that period of hallucination, in which he saw Arsène always dancing about the stage, it was not the music of the orchestra that rang in his ears, but the doctor's soft humming and the gentle tapping of his fingers on the ebony snuffbox; and then, from time to time, a flash passed before his eyes, blinding him with showers of sparks. It was the double gleam cast by the doctor's snuffbox and the dancer's clasp. It was the sympathetic attraction between the diamond guillotine and the diamond skull. It was the fixed stare of the doctor's eyes, which seemed at his

will to attract and repel the fascinating danseuse, as the serpent's eye attracts and repels the bird it fascinates.

Twenty times, a hundred times, a thousand times, the idea of going again to the Opéra came to Hoffmann's mind; but, until the time came, he promised himself that he would not yield to the temptation. Moreover, he had combated the temptation in every way, having recourse to his locket first, and then trying to write to Antonia; but Antonia's portrait seemed to have taken on such a sad expression that Hoffmann closed the locket almost as soon as he opened it, and the first lines of every letter he began were so labored and embarrassed that he had torn up ten letters before he had written a third of the first page.

At last the second day passed. At last the time for opening the theatre approached. At last the clock struck seven, and, at that last summons, Hoffmann, as if carried away by a power stronger than himself, rushed down the stairs and darted away in the direction of Rue Saint-Martin.

That time, in less than quarter of an hour, without asking any one to point out the way, he arrived at the door of the Opéra as if an invisible guide had gone before him.

But, strange to say, the door was not surrounded by an eager crowd as it was two days before, either because some incident unknown to Hoffmann had rendered the performance less attractive, or because the audience was already inside.

Hoffmann tossed his six francs to the ticket-seller, received his ticket, and hurried into the hall.

The aspect of the place was greatly changed. In the first place it was only half full; and then, in place of the beautiful women and men of fashion he had expected

to see, he saw only women in short gowns and men in short jackets; no jewels, no flowers, no bare breasts rising and falling in the voluptuous atmosphere that reigns in aristocratic theatres; round caps and red caps, all adorned with huge national cockades; garments of dark hue, and a cloud of sadness on every face; and on either side a hideous, grinning bust, one laughter, the other sorrow, — the busts of Voltaire and Marat.

And lastly, the proscenium box at the left was only a dimly-lighted hole, a dark and untenanted aperture, — the cavern still, but without the lion.

There were two vacant seats, side by side, in the orchestra stalls. Hoffmann took one of them, the same he had occupied before. The other was the one the doctor had occupied, but, as we have said, it was vacant.

The first act was played through without Hoffmann's bestowing a thought upon the orchestra or the performers. He was familiar with the orchestra and had formed his opinion of it at a first hearing. The actors he cared but little about. He had not come to see them; he had come to see Arsène.

The curtain rose for the second act and the ballet began.

The young man's heart and soul and mind were all in suspense.

He was awaiting Arsène's appearance.

Suddenly he uttered an exclamation.

Arsène no longer took the part of Flore.

The woman who appeared in the part was a stranger to him, a woman like all other women.

All the fibres of that throbbing body relaxed. Hoffmann sank back in his chair with a long sigh and looked about him.

The little man in black was in his seat; but he no longer wore his diamond buckles, his diamond rings, nor carried his snuffbox with the skull in diamonds.

His buckles were of copper, his rings of silver gilt, his snuffbox of unpolished silver.

He no longer hummed; he no longer beat time.

How had he come there? Hoffmann had no idea. He had neither seen him come nor felt him pass.

"O monsieur!" he cried.

"Say, citizen, my young friend, and call me thee and thou, if possible," said the little man in black, "or you will get my head cut off and your own too."

"In God's name where is she?" asked Hoffmann.

"Ah, that 's the question. Where is she? It seems that her tiger, who never takes his eyes off her, noticed day before yesterday that she exchanged signs with a young man in the orchestra stalls. It seems that that young man ran after the carriage; so that yesterday he forced Arsène to break her engagement, and she is no longer at the theatre."

"But how did the manager allow it?"

"My young friend, the manager is anxious to keep his head on his shoulders, although it 's an ugly sort of head; but he says that he is used to it, and that another handsomer one might not graft readily."

"Ah! mein Gott! that 's why the place is so gloomy!" cried Hoffmann. "That is why there are no flowers, no diamonds, no jewels! That is why you have n't your diamond buckles, your diamond rings, and your diamond snuffbox! That is why those two horrible busts are placed at the sides of the stage, instead of the busts of Apollo and Terpsichore! Pah!"

"Hoity-toity! what 's that you say?" exclaimed the

doctor. "Where did you see such a hall as you describe? Where did you see me with diamond rings and diamond snuffboxes? Where did you see the busts of Apollo and Terpsichore? Why, it 's two years now since flowers ceased to bloom, since all the diamonds were turned into assignats, and the jewels melted down on the altar of the country. As for myself, thank God! I have never had any buckles but these copper ones, any other rings than this paltry silver gilt affair, any other snuffbox than this poor silver one. As for the busts of Apollo and Terpsichore, they used to stand there once, but the friends of humanity broke the bust of Apollo and replaced it by the apostle Voltaire's, and the friends of the people shattered the bust of Terpsichore and replaced it by that of the god Marat."

"Oh!" cried Hoffmann, "it is impossible. I tell you that, day before yesterday, I saw this hall perfumed with flowers, resplendent with rich costumes, gleaming with diamonds, and men of fashion in the places occupied by yonder fishwomen in short gowns and yonder blackguards in *carmagnoles*. I tell you that you had diamond buckles to your shoes, diamond rings on your fingers, a death's head in diamonds on your snuffbox. I tell you — "

"And I tell you, young man," rejoined the little man in black, "that day before yesterday *she* was here. I tell you that her presence illumined everything. I tell you that her breath made the roses bloom, made the jewels glisten, made your imaginary diamonds sparkle. I tell you that you love her, young man, and that you saw the hall through the prism of your love. Arsène is no longer here; your heart is dead; your eyes are disenchanted. You see swanskin, cotton, coarse cloth,

red caps, dirty hands, and dishevelled hair. In short you see the world as it is, things as they are."

"O my God!" cried Hoffmann, letting his head fall forward in his hands, "is all this true, and am I really so near going mad?"

XII.

THE WINE-SHOP.

HOFFMANN did not emerge from his lethargy until he felt a hand upon his shoulder.

He raised his head. All the lights were out, and everything was dark around him. The unlighted theatre seemed to him like the corpse of the theatre he had seen in full life. The soldier on guard alone was walking about, silent as the death watch; no lights, no orchestra, no brilliancy, no sound, save a single voice that mumbled in his ear,—

"Come, citizen, citizen, what are you doing here? You 're at the Opéra, citizen. People go to sleep here, to be sure, but not to bed."

Hoffmann finally looked in the direction from which the voice came, and saw a little old woman who was pulling him by his coat-collar.

It was the keeper of the orchestra stalls, who, being ignorant of the persistent spectator's intentions, did not wish to retire until she had seen him go out.

Once wakened from his torpor, however, Hoffmann made no resistance. He gave a sigh and rose, murmuring the word,—

"Arsène!"

"Oh! yes, Arsène," said the little old woman, "Arsène! So you are in love with her like everybody else, young man? It 's a great loss to the Opéra, especially to us box-openers."

"To you box-openers," said Hoffmann, overjoyed to find some one who would talk with him about the dancer. "How is it a loss to you that Arsène is no longer at the theatre?"

"*Dame!* that 's easily explained. In the first place, whenever she danced she filled the house, and then there was a big demand for stools and chairs and little benches, —at the Opéra you have to pay for everything. People paid extra for the stools and chairs and little benches, and those were our small profits. I say small profits," added the old woman slyly, "because there were large profits beside, citizen, you understand."

"Large profits?"

"Yes."

And the old woman winked.

"What were the large profits? tell me, my good woman."

"The large profits came from those who asked questions about her, wanted to know her address, and sent notes to her. There 's a price for everything, you understand; so much for answering questions, so much for the address, so much for the note. We did quite a little business, in fact, and earned an honest living."

The old woman heaved a sigh which might be compared, not unfavorably, to the one emitted by Hoffmann at the beginning of the dialogue we have reported.

"Aha!" said Hoffmann, "so you used to answer questions about her, to tell her address, and deliver notes to her, did you? Do you still do it?"

"Alas! monsieur, any information I could give you would be useless to you now. No one knows Arsène's address, and any note you might give me for her would be wasted. If you want any other, Madame Vestris, Mademoiselle Bigottini, Mademoiselle —"

"Thanks, my good woman, thanks. I don't care to know anything about anybody except Mademoiselle Arsène. Take this," said Hoffmann, taking three francs from his pocket, "for your trouble in waking me."

He left the old woman and walked slowly out to the boulevard, intending to follow the same road he had followed two nights before, the instinct that had guided him thither early in the evening having deserted him.

His feelings, however, were very different, and his gait bore witness to the difference in his feelings.

On the other occasion, his gait was that of a man who has seen Hope pass by, and who runs after her, not pausing to reflect that God has given her her long azure wings so that man may never overtake her. His mouth was open, and his breath came in gasps; his head was erect, and his arms outstretched. Now, on the contrary, he walked slowly, like the man who, after a vain pursuit of Hope, has lost sight of her; his mouth was tightly closed, his head bent, his arms hanging by his sides. The other time it had taken him hardly five minutes to go from Porte Saint-Martin to Rue Montmartre; this time it took him more than an hour, and still another hour to go from Rue Montmartre to his hotel; for in the state of dejection into which he had fallen, it mattered little to him whether he returned home early or late or not at all.

It is said that there is a special Providence for drunkards and lovers; that Providence, doubtless, watched over Hoffmann. It helped him to avoid the patrols; it helped him to find the quays, then the bridges, and then his hotel, where he appeared, to the great scandal of his landlady, at half-past one in the morning.

Meanwhile, through all his dejection, one little golden ray danced about in Hoffmann's imagination like a firefly in the darkness. The doctor,—assuming that the doctor

really existed, and was not a mere creature of his imagination, a delusion of his mind,— the doctor had told him that Arsène had been taken away from the theatre by her lover, because that lover was jealous of a young man in the orchestra stalls, with whom Arsène had exchanged a too tender glance.

The doctor had also said that the thing that had stirred the tyrant's jealousy to its highest pitch was that that same young man had lain in ambush at the stage door, and had run like a madman behind the carriage. Now, the young man in the orchestra stalls who had exchanged passionate glances with Arsène was himself, Hoffmann; the young man who had lain in ambush at the stage door was himself; and, lastly, the young man who had run desperately behind the carriage, that young man likewise was himself, Hoffmann. Arsène must have noticed him, therefore, as she was paying the penalty of her momentary distraction; therefore, Arsène was suffering for him. He had entered the lovely dancer's life through the door of suffering; but he had entered it, that was the main point; it was for him to maintain his footing there. But how, by what means, through what channel could he correspond with Arsène, tell her who and what he was, and that he loved her? It would have been no small task for a full-blooded Parisian to find the fair Arsène in the wilderness of that immense city. It was an impossible task for Hoffmann, who had been there only three days and had great difficulty in finding himself.

And so Hoffmann did not even take the trouble to look for her; he felt that chance alone could help him. Every second day he looked at the advertisements of the Opéra, and every second day he was grieved to see that Paris was to deliver his judgment in the absence of one who was much more worthy of the apple than Venus.

At other times he did not think of going to the Opéra.

For an instant he had an idea of going to the Convention, or to the Cordeliers, to dog Danton's footsteps, and by watching him day and night to guess where he had hidden the lovely dancer.

He actually went to the Convention and to the Cordeliers, but Danton was not at either place; for seven or eight days he had not been seen at either. Weary of the battle he had fought for two years past, vanquished by ennui rather than by the superiority of his foes, Danton seemed to have withdrawn from the political arena.

Danton was said to be at his country estate. Where was his country estate? No one knew; some said at Reuil, others at Auteuil.

Danton was as hard to find as Arsène.

One would think perhaps that Arsène's absence would have led Hoffmann's thoughts back to Antonia; but, strange to say, it did nothing of the sort. In vain did Hoffmann put forth every effort to bring his mind back to the poor child: for an instant, by the force of his will, all the powers of his memory would be concentrated upon Master Gottlieb's studio; but, at the end of that instant, the scores heaped upon tables and pianos, Master Gottlieb stamping at his desk, Antonia lying on her couch, all disappeared, to give place to a huge, brilliantly-lighted frame, in which, at first, shadows moved to and fro; then those shadows became bodies, the bodies assumed mythological forms, and finally all those mythological forms, all those heroes, nymphs, gods, and demi-gods disappeared, to be succeeded by a single goddess, the goddess of gardens, the enchanting Flore, that is to say, the divine Arsène, the woman with the velvet necklace and diamond clasp. Thereupon Hoffmann would fall, not into a reverie but into a trance from which he could

rouse himself only by plunging into real life, by elbowing the passers-by in the street, by rushing about in the crowd and the uproar.

And so when this hallucination that preyed upon Hoffmann became too vivid, he would go out, walk along the quay, cross Pont-Neuf, and never pause until he reached the corner of Rue de la Monnaie. There he had found a wine-shop which was the rendezvous of the hardest smokers in the capital. There Hoffmann could fancy himself in some English tavern, in some Dutch music-hall, or some German beer-garden, for the pipe-smoke made the atmosphere so thick that none but a smoker of the first rank could breathe it.

Once inside the *Fraternité*, Hoffmann would seat himself at a small table in the darkest corner, call for a bottle of beer from the brewery of Citizen Santerre, — who had recently resigned his commission as general of the Paris National Guard in favor of Citizen Henriot, — load to the brim the huge pipe with which we are already acquainted, and envelop himself within a few moments in a cloud of smoke as dense as that in which lovely Venus enveloped her son Æneas whenever that loving mother deemed it expedient to rescue her beloved child from the wrath of his enemies.

Eight or ten days had passed since Hoffmann's adventure at the Opéra and the disappearance of the beautiful danseuse; it was one o'clock in the afternoon. Hoffmann had been sitting in his wine-shop about half an hour, doing his best, with all the strength of his lungs, to surround himself with the circle of dense smoke which separated him from his neighbors, when it seemed to him that he distinguished something like a human figure through the vapor; that he heard, above all the noises of the place, the humming and tapping of the little man in

black; furthermore, it seemed to him that, in the midst of the smoke, there was a luminous point from which sparks were flying. He opened his eyes, which were half-closed in a pleasant drowsiness, raised the lids with difficulty, and saw, upon a stool facing him, his neighbor at the Opéra; and he recognized him the more readily because the eccentric doctor had, or seemed to have, his diamond buckles on his shoes, his diamond rings on his fingers, and the snuffbox with the death's head.

"The devil!" said Hoffmann, "I am going mad again."

And he promptly closed his eyes.

But the more tightly his eyes were closed, the more distinctly Hoffmann heard the low humming accompaniment and the drumming with the fingers; and it was so distinct that Hoffmann realized that there must be a foundation of reality for it all, and that the only question was how much was real.

He opened one eye, then the other; the little man in black was still in the same place.

"Good morning, young man," he said to Hoffmann. "You were asleep, I think; take a pinch, it will rouse you."

He opened his snuffbox and offered it to the young man, who mechanically put out his hand, took a pinch of the snuff and inhaled it.

On the instant it seemed to him as if a bright light streamed into his mind.

"Ah! is it you, dear doctor?" he cried; "how glad I am to see you!"

"If you are so glad to see me," rejoined the doctor, "why have n't you looked for me?"

"As if I knew your address."

"Oh, that 's a trifling difficulty. They would have given it to you at the nearest cemetery."

"But I don't know your name."

"The doctor with the death's head; everybody knows me by that name. Then there is one place where you are sure of finding me."

"Where is that?"

"At the Opéra. I am physician to the Opéra. You know that, for you have seen me there twice."

"Oh! the Opéra," said Hoffmann with a sigh, and a shake of the head.

"Yes; don't you go any more?"

"No, I don't go any more."

"Since Arsène ceased to take the part of Flore?"

"You have said it; and so long as she stays away, I shall not go."

"You love her, young man, you love her."

"I am not certain whether the disease I am suffering with is called love, but I do know that, if I don't see her again, I shall die of not seeing her, or go mad."

"*Peste!* you must n't go mad! you must n't die! There are few remedies for madness and none at all for death."

"What must I do then?"

"*Dame!* you must see her again."

"What do you say — see her again?"

"To be sure!"

"Do you know any way?"

"Perhaps."

"What is it?"

"Wait a moment."

And the doctor seemed lost in thought, winking his eyes and drumming on his snuffbox.

After a moment he opened his eyes and said, holding his fingers in the air over the box,—

"You are a painter, you told me?"

"Yes, painter, musician, and poet."

"We need only painting for the moment."

"Very good!"

"Arsène has told me to find a painter for her."

"What to do?"

"Why do people generally want painters? *pardieu!* to paint her portrait."

"Arsène's portrait!" cried Hoffmann, springing to his feet; "oh! I am ready! I am ready!"

"Hush! remember that I am a serious-minded man."

"You are my preserver!" cried Hoffmann, throwing his arms around the little man's neck.

"Youth, youth!" muttered the latter, accompanying the word with the same sneering laugh that his death's head would have laughed, if it had been of life-size.

"Come! come!" said Hoffmann.

"But you must have a box of colors, brushes, canvas."

"I have all those at home; come!"

"Very good," said the doctor.

And they left the wine-shop together.

XIII.

THE PORTRAIT.

As they left the wine-shop Hoffmann made a gesture to call a cab; but the doctor struck his thin hands together, and at that sound, which resembled the sound that a skeleton's hands would have made, a carriage lined with black, drawn by two black horses, and driven by a coachman dressed in black, drove up. Where was it standing? Where did it come from? It would have been as difficult for Hoffmann to say, as it would have been for Cinderella to say where the chariot came from in which she drove to Prince Miriflore's ball.

A little groom, with a black skin as well as black clothes, opened the door. Hoffmann and the doctor entered, seated themselves side by side, and the carriage at once rolled noiselessly away toward Hoffmann's lodgings.

When they reached the door Hoffmann hesitated about going up to his room. He was afraid that, as soon as his back was turned, carriage, horses, doctor, and servants would disappear as they had appeared. But for what purpose could doctor, carriage, horses, and servants have gone out of their way to take him, Hoffmann, from Rue de la Monnaie to Quai aux Fleurs? None at all.

Reassured by that simple application of the principles of logic, Hoffmann alighted from the carriage, entered the house, ran hastily upstairs, rushed into his room,

seized his palette, brushes, and box of colors, selected the largest of his canvases, and descended as rapidly as he had ascended.

The carriage was still at the door.

Brushes, palette, and box of colors were bestowed inside the carriage. The canvas was intrusted to the groom.

Then the carriage rolled away as swiftly and silently as before.

Ten minutes later it stopped in front of a delightful little house on Rue de Hanovre, number 15.

Hoffmann made a note of the street and number, so that, in case of need, he might be able to return thither without the doctor's help.

The door opened. The doctor evidently was known, for the concierge did not even ask him where he was going. Hoffmann, with his brushes, his box of colors, his palette, and his canvas, followed the doctor and entered the house.

They went up to the first floor and entered a reception-room which might have been taken for the vestibule of the poet's house at Pompeii.

The reader will remember that the Greek style was fashionable at this time. Arsène's reception-room was frescoed and decorated with bronze candelabra and statues.

From the reception-room Hoffmann and the doctor entered the salon.

The salon was Greek like the reception-room, hung with Sedan cloth at seventy francs the ell. The carpet alone cost six thousand francs. The doctor called Hoffmann's attention to the carpet, which represented the battle of Arbela, copied from the famous mosaic at Pompeii.

Hoffmann, dazzled by such unheard-of magnificence, could not understand that such carpets were made to walk upon.

From the salon they entered the boudoir, which was hung with cashmere. At the end of the room was a low bed, also used as a couch, like that upon which Monsieur Guérin afterwards painted Dido listening to the adventures of Æneas. There Arsène had given orders for them to wait.

"Now, young man," said the doctor, "here you are in the house, and it is for you to conduct yourself in a becoming manner. It goes without saying that if the titular lover should surprise you here you would be a dead man."

"Oh!" cried Hoffmann, "let me see her again, just let me see her again, and —"

The words died upon his lips. He stood with staring eyes, arms extended, and heaving breast.

A door concealed in the wainscoting had opened, and Arsène appeared from behind a revolving mirror, a veritable divinity of the temple in which she deigned to appear to her adorer.

Her costume was the costume of Aspasia in all its olden magnificence, with her pearls in her hair, her gold-embroidered, purple cloak, her long white dress, caught in at the waist by a simple girdle of pearls, rings on her feet and hands, and, with it all, that strange ornament which seemed inseparable from her person, the velvet necklace, hardly four lines in width, and fastened by its lugubrious diamond-clasp.

"Ah! citizen, are you the one who is to paint my portrait?"

"Yes," stammered Hoffmann. "Yes, madame, and the doctor has kindly consented to be my sponsor."

He looked about as if to call upon the doctor to support his statement, but the doctor had disappeared.

"What!" he cried, sadly embarrassed.

"What are you looking for? What do you want, citizen?"

"Why, madame, I am looking for, I want — I want the doctor, the person who brought me here."

"What do you need of him," said Arsène, "so long as you are here?"

"But the doctor, the doctor?" said Hoffmann.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Arsène, testily, "do you propose to waste time looking for him? The doctor is attending to his business; let us attend to ours."

"I am at your service, madame," said Hoffmann, trembling from head to foot.

"So you agree to paint my portrait?"

"I am the most fortunate man in the world to have been selected for such an honor; but I have only one fear."

"Bah! you are going to play the modest man. If you don't succeed I shall try somebody else. *He* is determined to have a portrait of me. I saw that you looked at me like a man who was likely to keep my face in his mind, and I gave you the preference."

"Thanks, thanks a hundred times!" cried Hoffmann, devouring Arsène with his eyes. "Oh! yes, yes, indeed I have kept your face in my mind. Here, here, here!"

And he placed his hand upon his heart.

Suddenly he staggered and turned pale.

"What's the matter?" Arsène inquired in an offhand way.

"Nothing," replied Hoffmann, "nothing; let us begin."

When he placed his hand on his heart he felt Antonia's locket between his breast and his shirt.

"Let us begin," echoed Arsène. "That 's very easy to say. In the first place this is n't the costume that *he* wants me to be painted in."

That word *he*, which she had used twice, pierced Hoffmann's heart like one of the golden pins which secured the modern Aspasia's head-dress.

"How does *he* want you to be painted?" asked Hoffmann with visible bitterness.

"As Erigone."

"Excellent! the head-dress of vine leaves will become you wonderfully."

"Do you think so?" said Arsène, affectedly. "I fancy that the panther's skin won't make me very ugly either."

She struck a bell.

A maid entered.

"Eucharis," said Arsène, "bring the thyrsus, the vine leaves, and the tiger's skin."

She drew out the two or three pins that kept her hair in place, and, with a shake of her head, enveloped herself in billows of black hair which fell in cascades over her shoulders, followed the rounded outline of her hips, and trailed upon the carpet, a dense, wavy mass.

Hoffmann cried out in admiration.

"Well! what is it?" said Arsène.

"Why, I never have seen such hair before!" cried Hoffmann.

"*He* wants me to make the most of it, and that is why *we* chose the costume of Erigone, which allows me to wear my hair loose."

That time the *he* and the *we* dealt Hoffmann's heart two blows instead of one.

Meanwhile Mademoiselle Eucharis had brought the grapes, the thyrsus, and the tiger's skin.

"Is that all we need?" queried Arsène.

"Yes, yes, I think so," stammered Hoffmann.

"Very good; leave us, and don't return until I ring."

Mademoiselle Eucharis went out and closed the door behind her.

"Now, citizen," said Arsène, "just help me to arrange this head-dress; that 's your business. I depend a great deal on the painter's taste to make me look well."

"And you are right!" cried Hoffmann. "Mein Gott! mein Gott! how lovely you will be!"

He seized the branch of vine leaves and twined it around Arsène's head with the deft art of the painter, who makes everything contribute to the general effect; and then, shuddering at the first touch, he took the long perfumed hair with the ends of his fingers, intermingled the strands of glossy black with the topaz grapes and the emerald and ruby leaves of the autumn vine; and, as he had promised, under his hand, the hand of a poet, painter, and lover, the dancer's beauty was so enhanced that, upon looking at herself in the mirror, she uttered an exclamation of joy and pride.

"You were right," she said. "Yes, I am beautiful, very beautiful. Now, let us go on."

"What do you say? Let us go on?" queried Hoffmann.

"Why, what about my Bacchante's costume?"

Hoffmann began to understand.

"Mein Gott!" he murmured; "mein Gott!"

Arsène smilingly unfastened her purple cloak, until it was secured only by a single pin, which she tried in vain to reach.

"Why don't you help me?" she said impatiently, "or must I call Eucharis?"

"No, no!" cried Hoffmann. He darted to her side and removed the rebellious pin. The cloak fell at the beautiful Greek's feet.

"There!" said the young man, drawing a long breath.

"Tell me," said Arsène, "do you think the tiger's skin will look well over this long muslin dress? I don't think it will, for my part. Besides, *he* wants a genuine Bacchante, not as you see them on the stage, but as they are in Carrache's and Albano's pictures."

"Why, the Bacchantes are nude in Carrache's and Albano's pictures!" cried Hoffmann.

"Well! that 's the way *he* wants me, except for the tiger's skin which you can drape as you choose; that 's your business."

As she spoke she loosened the ribbon at her waist and unfastened the clasp at her neck, so that the dress slipped down the full length of her lovely body, leaving it bare, as it dropped from her shoulders to her feet.

"Oh!" said Hoffmann, falling on his knees, "this is no mortal, but a goddess."

Arsène pushed the dress and the cloak away with her foot. Then she took up the tiger's skin.

"Come, what do we do with this?" she said. "Pray help me, citizen painter, I am not accustomed to dressing alone."

The ingenuous danseuse called it dressing.

Hoffmann drew near, walking unsteadily, drunken, dazzled, took the tiger's skin, clasped its golden claws around the Bacchante's shoulders, bade her sit, or rather recline on the couch of red cashmere, where she seemed a statue of Parian marble save for the rise and fall of her bosom and the smile upon her lips.

"Am I in a good position?" she asked, putting her arm under her head, and taking a bunch of grapes which she seemed to press against her lips.

"Oh! yes, lovely, lovely, lovely!" whispered Hoffmann. And the lover carried the day over the painter. He fell on his knees, and with a movement swift as thought seized Arsène's hand and covered it with kisses.

She withdrew her hand, more in surprise than wrath.

"Well! what in heaven's name are you doing?" she asked the young man.

The question was asked in such a calm, cool tone, that Hoffmann staggered back, pressing his hands against his temples.

"Nothing, nothing," he faltered. "Forgive me, I am going mad."

"I should think you were," said she.

"Tell me," cried Hoffmann, "why did you send for me? Tell me, tell me!"

"Why, to have you paint my portrait, and for nothing else."

"Ah! yes," said Hoffmann. "Yes, you are right; to paint your portrait, nothing else."

Making a mighty effort to recover his self-possession, Hoffmann placed his canvas on his easel, took his palette and his brushes, and began to sketch the intoxicating picture that he had before his eyes.

But he had presumed too far upon his strength. When he saw his voluptuous model posing, not simply in her glowing reality, but reflected a thousand times by the innumerable mirrors in the boudoir; when he found himself in the presence of ten Bacchantes instead of one Erigone; when he saw reflected in each mirror that intoxicating smile, the undulations of that breast which

the tiger's golden skin only half covered, he felt that he was called upon to exert more than human self-control, and, dashing down his palette and brushes, he rushed at the beautiful Bacchante and imprinted on her shoulder a kiss in which there was as much frenzied passion as love.

But at that very instant the door was thrown open, and the nymph Eucharis rushed into the boudoir, crying, —

"He! he! he!"

Instantly, before he had time to collect his thoughts, Hoffmann was pushed out of the boudoir by the two women, and the door closed behind him; and, veritably mad with love and rage and jealousy, he staggered through the salon, slid down the stair-rail rather than descended the stairs, and found himself, with no idea how he came there, in the street, having left in Arsène's boudoir his brushes, his box of colors, and his palette, which were nothing, and his hat, which might prove to be much.

XIV.

THE TEMPTER.

WHAT rendered Hoffmann's situation even more lamentable was that his grief was coupled with humiliation; that it was perfectly evident that he had not been summoned by Arsène as a man whom she had noticed at the Opéra, but purely and simply as a painter, a portrait-painting machine, a mirror that reflects the bodies placed before it. Hence Arsène's unmoved manner of removing all her garments, one after another, in his presence; hence her amazement when he kissed her hand; hence her wrath when, in the midst of the burning kiss with which he had reddened her shoulder, he told her that he loved her.

Indeed, was it not stark madness for him, a simple German student, who had come to Paris with three or four hundred thalers, a sum hardly sufficient to pay for the carpet in her reception-room, — was it not madness for him to aspire to that fashionable danseuse, the mistress of the extravagant and voluptuous Danton? That woman was not to be moved by ringing words but by the ring of gold. Her favored lover was not the one who loved her best, but the one who paid the highest price. Let Hoffmann have more money than Danton and Danton would be shown the door when Hoffmann arrived.

Meanwhile it was an undeniable fact that the one who had been shown the door was not Danton but Hoffmann.

Hoffmann returned to his little room, humbler and more melancholy than he had ever been.

So long as he had not been face to face with Arsène, he had had some hope; but the things that he had seen, — her utter indifference to him as a man, the luxurious surroundings in which he had found her, and which were not only her physical life but her moral life, — all those things made it impossible for him even to hope for her unless a vast, unimaginable sum of money should fall into his hands, that is to say, unless a miracle should happen.

So he returned to his lodgings, utterly crushed. His strange passion for Arsène, a passion that was entirely physical and magnetic, and into which the heart did not enter, had manifested itself thus far in fierce, feverish excitement.

Now, that excitement was changed to profound prostration.

A single hope remained, — to find the doctor again and ask his opinion as to what he should do, although there was something extraordinary, fantastic, supernatural about the man, which made him feel that, whenever he was with him, he left real life behind and entered into a sort of dream where neither his will power nor his freedom of action accompanied him, and where he became the plaything of a world that existed for him but not for other people.

So he returned to the wine-shop on Rue de la Monnaie at the usual hour on the following day; but to no purpose did he envelop himself in a cloud of smoke. No face resembling the doctor's appeared to him therein. To no purpose did he close his eyes. When he opened them no one was sitting on the stool he had placed on the other side of the table.

A week passed thus.

On the eighth day Hoffmann, having lost patience, left the wine-shop an hour earlier than usual, that is to say, about four in the afternoon, and walked mechanically toward Rue Saint-Honoré by Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois and the Louvre.

He had hardly reached that thoroughfare when he noticed a great commotion in the direction of the cemetery des Innocents, and that it seemed to be approaching Place du Palais-Royal. He remembered what had happened on the day following his arrival in Paris, and recognized the same sounds, the same uproar that had made a deep impression on him at the time of Madame du Barry's execution. It was, in fact, the tumbrils from the Conciergerie, on their way to Place de la Révolution, laden with the condemned of the day.

We know Hoffmann's horror of the spectacle; and so, as the tumbrils rapidly advanced he darted into a café on the corner of Rue de la Loi, turned his back to the street, closed his eyes, and put his hands over his ears, for Madame du Barry's shrieks were still echoing in the depths of his heart. Then, when he supposed that the tumbrils had passed, he turned, and to his unbounded amazement saw his friend Zacharias Werner stepping down from a chair which he had mounted in order to see better.

"Werner!" cried Hoffmann, rushing up to him, "Werner!"

"Hallo, is it you?" said the poet. "Where were you?"

"I was here, but I had my hands over my ears so as not to hear the shrieks of those poor wretches, and my eyes closed so as not to see them."

"Really, my dear friend, you make a mistake," said

Werner, "for you are a painter! And what you would have seen would have furnished you with a subject for a fine picture. There was a woman in the third tumbril, a wonderful creature, with such a neck and shoulders and hair! cut off behind, to be sure, but falling to the ground on both sides."

"Look you," said Hoffmann. "I saw the finest picture that could be seen of that kind. I saw Madame du Barry, and I do not need to see any others. If I ever want to paint a picture, believe me, that sight will be enough for me; but I don't propose to paint any more pictures."

"Why not?" queried Werner.

"I have conceived a perfect horror of painting."

"Some fresh disappointment?"

"My dear Werner, I shall go mad if I stay in Paris."

"You will go mad wherever you are, my dear Hoffmann. You might as well be in Paris as anywhere else. Meanwhile tell me what it is that is driving you mad."

"Oh! my dear Werner, I am in love."

"With Antonia, I know. So you told me."

"No," said Hoffmann, with a start. "No, that 's a different matter. I love Antonia!"

"The devil! it 's a subtle distinction. Tell me about it. Citizen official, some beer and glasses!"

The two young men filled their pipes, and seated themselves on opposite sides of a table in the darkest corner of the café.

There Hoffmann told Werner all that had happened to him, from the day that he went to the Opéra and saw Arsène dance, down to the moment when the two women pushed him out of the boudoir.

"Well?" said Werner, when Hoffmann had finished.

"Well!" echoed Hoffmann, amazed that his friend was not as downcast as himself.

"I ask you," continued Werner, "what there is so desperate in all that?"

"Why, my dear fellow, now that I know that the woman can be won only by money, I have lost all hope."

"Why have you lost all hope?"

"Because I shall never have five hundred louis to throw at her feet."

"Why should n't you have them? For my part, I have had five hundred louis, yes, a thousand, two thousand."

"Where do you suppose I am to get them? Great God!" cried Hoffmann.

"Why, at the Eldorado I told you of, at the source of the river Pactolus, my dear fellow, at the gaming-table."

"At the gaming-table!" exclaimed Hoffmann with a shudder. "Why, you know that I swore to Antonia that I would n't gamble."

"Bah!" laughed Werner. "You also swore that you would be true to her!"

Hoffmann heaved a deep sigh, and pressed the locket against his heart.

"At the gaming-table, my friend!" continued Werner. "Ah! that 's the bank for you! It is n't like the bank at Mannheim or Homburg, that threatens to break for a few paltry thousands. A million, my boy! a million! stacks of gold! I believe that all the legal tender in France has taken shelter there. None of your wretched paper money, none of your vile, demonetized assignats, which are worth only a fourth of their face value, but noble louis, noble double louis, noble quadruples! Look, do you want to see some?"

And Werner drew from his pocket a handful of louis and showed them to Hoffmann. Their golden beams flashed through the mirror of his eyes to the inmost recesses of his brain.

"Oh, no! no! never!" he cried, remembering at the same moment the old officer's prediction and Antonia's prayer. "I will never gamble!"

"You are wrong. With such luck as you have you would break the bank."

"And Antonia! Antonia!"

"Bah! my dear friend, who will tell Antonia that you gambled, that you won a million? Who will tell her that, with twenty-five thousand francs you gratified your fancy for the fair ballet-dancer? Believe me, when you return to Mannheim with nine hundred and seventy-five thousand, Antonia will never ask you where you got your forty-eight thousand a year, nor what you did with the other fifteen thousand."

As he spoke, Werner rose.

"Where are you going?" Hoffmann asked him.

"I am going to see a mistress of mine, a lady at the Comédie-Française, who honors me with her favor, and whom I subsidize with half of my winnings. *Dame!* I am a poet, so I turn my attention to a literary theatre. You are a musician, and you make your choice at a singing and dancing theatre. Good luck at play, my dear friend. My compliments to Mademoiselle Arsène. Don't forget the number of the bank; it is 113. Farewell."

"Ah!" muttered Hoffmann, "you told me that before, and I have n't forgotten it."

He allowed his friend to depart, having neglected again, as at their first meeting, to ask him for his address.

But, although Werner had left him, Hoffmann was not alone. Every word his friend uttered was visible to him and palpable, so to speak. They glistened in his eyes and whispered in his ears.

In very truth, where could Hoffmann go to obtain gold, if not to the golden spring? Had he not found the only possible means of gratifying an impossible longing? Ah! yes, Werner had said truly. Had he not already been false to a part of his oath? What mattered it then if he should be false to the other part?

And again, as Werner had said, he might win not twenty-five thousand, not fifty thousand, not a hundred thousand, but a million francs. The material horizons of fields, woods, and seas have limits. The horizon of the green cloth has none.

The demon of play is like Satan. It has the power of carrying the gambler to the top of the highest mountain on earth, and there pointing out to him all the kingdoms of the world.

And what happiness, what bliss, what pride would be his when he should return to Arsène, to the same boudoir from which he had been thrust out! With what supreme disdain he would crush that woman and her terrible lover, when, for all reply to the words, "Why are you here?" he, another Jupiter, should pour down a shower of gold upon that other Danaë!

And all this was no longer an hallucination of his mind, a dream of his imagination, but it was reality; it was possible. The chances of winning and losing were even. Aye, those of winning were the greater, for, as we know, Hoffmann was lucky at play.

Oh! that number 113, that number 113, with its glowing figures, how it beckoned to Hoffmann, how it showed the way, an infernal beacon-light, to the abyss

in whose depths the demon Vertigo roars, writhing upon a couch of gold!

Hoffmann struggled for more than an hour against the fiercest of all passions. Then at the end of that hour, feeling that it was impossible for him to resist longer, he tossed a fifteen-sous piece on the table, making the waiter a gift of the change, and ran without stopping for breath to Quai aux Fleurs, went up to his room, took the three hundred thalers he still possessed, and, without giving himself time for reflection, leaped into a cab, shouting, —

"To Palais-Égalité!"

XV.

NUMBER 113.

The Palais-Royal, which was called at that time Palais-Égalité, and which has also been called Palais-National, — for, with us, the first thing that revolutionists do is change the names of streets and squares, so that they can be changed back again when the revolution is at an end, — the Palais-Royal, we say, under which name it is most familiar to us, was not at that time what it is to-day; but in the matter of picturesqueness, and of strangeness too, it was in no wise inferior, especially in the evening, especially at the hour when Hoffmann arrived there.

Its arrangement differed little from what we see to-day, with the exception that what is now called the Galerie d'Orléans was then a double-roofed gallery, which was to give place later to a promenade with six rows of Doric columns; that there were chestnuts instead of lindens in the garden, and that, where the basin now is, there was a circus, a vast structure with walls of trellis-work, bordered with glass, and with shrubs and flowers on the summit.

Do not imagine that that circus was at all the same as the place of amusement to which we in our day have given the name. No, the acrobats and magicians who performed their feats in the Circus at the Palais-Égalité were of a different species from Monsieur Price, who, a few years ago, set France agog and gave birth to the Mazuriers and Auriols.

The Circus was occupied at the time of which we write by the "Friends of Truth," who gave performances there, and whose performances could be witnessed by any one who was a subscriber to the "Bouche de Fer" newspaper. With its number for the morning as a talisman, you were admitted in the evening to that abode of pleasure, and could listen there to the harangues of all the brethren, who were associated together, so they said, with the laudable purpose of protecting governors and governed, of making the laws impartial, and of going to every corner of the world in search of a friend of truth, whatever his nationality, whatever his color, whatever his opinions; and when the truth was discovered, they would reveal it to mankind.

As you see, there have always been men in France who were fully persuaded that it was their mission to enlighten the masses, and that the rest of mankind was a horde of absurd, useless creatures.

What has the passing breeze done with the names and ideas and vain pretensions of those people?

However the Circus made a noise of its own in the Palais-Égalité amid the general uproar there, and mingled its shrill notes in the grand concert that was performed every evening in that garden.

For it should be said that, in those days of privation, exile, terror, and proscription, the Palais-Royal had become the great centre to which the life that was repressed all day by political passions and struggles, resorted at night, in search of distraction and to do its utmost to forget the truth which the members of the Cercle Social and the stockholders of the Circus had set out to find. While all the quarters of Paris were dark and deserted; while the ominous patrols, composed of the jailers of to-day and the executioners of to-morrow, prowled about

like wild beasts in quest of any sort of prey; while, around the fireside of a dead or outlawed friend or parent, those who were left sadly exchanged in whispers their fears or their sorrows, the Palais-Royal shone like the god of evil. Its hundred and eighty arcades were brilliantly-lighted, it displayed its trinkets in the jewellers' windows, it scattered amid the popular *carmagnoles* and the universal misery its abandoned women, gleaming with diamonds, covered with white and red paint, dressed just as much as they were compelled to be, in silk or velvet, and exhibiting their marvellous shamelessness under the trees and in the galleries. This magnificent prostitution was a last withering satire upon the past, a last insult to the monarchy.

To display those creatures in their royal costumes was to throw mud after blood in the faces of that court of lovely, luxury-loving women, of whom Marie-Antoinette was the queen, and whom the revolutionary whirlwind had swept from the Trianon to Place de la Révolution, — as if a drunken man should drag his fiancée's white dress in the mire.

Luxury was abandoned to the vilest prostitutes; virtue was fated to go clad in rags.

That was one of the truths discovered by the Cercle Social.

But the people that had given the world such a violent forward impulsion, the Parisian people, in whom, unluckily, reasoning always comes after enthusiasm, — the result being that they are never cool-blooded enough to remember the foolish things they have done, — the people, we say, being poor and in rags, did not altogether understand the philosophy of that antithesis, and it was with envy, not with contempt, that they rubbed elbows with those brothel-queens, those ghastly sovereigns of

vice. And when, their passions excited by what they saw, when, with their eyes on fire, they sought to lay their hands upon those bodies that belonged to the whole world, they were called upon for money, and, having none, were ignominiously repulsed. Thus was the great principle of equality mocked at everywhere, — the great principle, which was proclaimed by the axe, written in blood, and which the prostitutes of the Palais-Royal were entitled to spit upon.

In days like those, mental invigoration reached such a point that such extraordinary contrasts were necessary to the reality of things. People were dancing not on the volcano, but in the crater itself, and their lungs, being accustomed to an atmosphere of sulphur and lava, were no longer content with the mild perfumes of other days.

Thus the Palais-Royal reared its head every evening, illuminating everything with its crown of flame. A procurer in stone, it shouted over the great, sorrowing city: —

"It is night, come! I have everything within my walls, fortune and love, gaming and women! I sell everything, even suicide and murder. Ye who have eaten nothing since yesterday, ye who suffer, ye who weep, come to me. Ye shall see how rich we are; ye shall see how we laugh! Have ye a conscience or a daughter to sell? Come! your eyes shall be filled with gold, your ears with obscenity. Ye shall wade to your knees in vice, in corruption, and in oblivion. Come here to-night, perhaps ye will be dead men to-morrow."

That last was the great argument. One must live as one was likely to die, rapidly.

And they came.

The most frequented spot of all was naturally that

where there was gambling. That was the place to obtain the means of enjoying the rest.

And so, of all those brilliant dens, number 113 was the one that cast the most brilliant light, with its red lantern, the huge eye of the Cyclops called Palais-Égalité.

If hell has a number, that number should be 113.

Ah! all one's wants were anticipated there.

On the ground-floor there was a restaurant. On the first floor there were the gambling-rooms. The breast of the building contained the heart, as was quite natural. And that was the house to which Hoffmann, Antonia's poetic lover, was hurrying with all speed.

Number 113 was where it is to-day, a few doors from the Maison Corcelet.

Hoffmann had no sooner alighted from his carriage and set his foot inside the gallery of the palace, than he was accosted by the divinities of the place, thanks to his foreign costume, which, in those days as in our own, inspired more confidence than the national costume.

A country is never so much despised as by itself.

"Where is number 113?" Hoffmann inquired of the damsel who had taken his arm.

"Oh! that 's where you 're going," said Aspasia, disdainfully. "Well, my lad, it 's where you see that red lantern. But try to keep two louis and remember number 115."

Hoffmann plunged into the passage-way pointed out to him as Curtius plunged into the gulf, and a moment later he was in the card-room.

There was the same noise as in a public auction-room.

To be sure many things were sold there.

The rooms were resplendent with gilding, chandeliers,

flowers, and women more beautiful, more richly dressed, and more décolletées than those below.

The noise that dominated all the other noises was the chink of gold. It was the heart-beat of that degraded multitude.

Hoffmann left at his right the room where *trente et quarante* was in progress, and passed on to the *salon de roulette.*

Around a large green table sat the players, all of whom were assembled for the same purpose, and no two of whom wore the same expression.

There were young and old; there were some whose elbows were worn through by leaning on that table. Among the men there were those who had lost their fathers the day before or that morning or that very evening, and whose thoughts were all absorbed by the revolving ball. In the true gambler a single sentiment continues to live, — desire; and that sentiment is nourished and increases in force at the expense of all others. Monsieur de Bassompierre, who was told that his mother was dead as he was about to dance with Marie de Médici, and who replied, " My mother will not die until I have danced," — Monsieur de Bassompierre was a devoted son compared to a gambler. A gambler actually at play, to whom such a remark should be made, would not even answer as Monsieur de Bassompierre did: in the first place, because it would be a waste of time, and in the second place, a gambler, if he never has a heart, ceases to have a mind when he is gambling. And when he is not gambling it is the same thing, he is thinking about it.

The gambler has all the virtues of his vice. He is sober, he is patient, he is indefatigable. A gambler who could abruptly turn aside to the profit of an hon

orable passion or a noble sentiment, the incredible energy that he places at the disposal of his passion for play, would instantly become one of the greatest men in the world. Never did Cæsar, Hannibal, or Napoleon, even when earnestly engaged in performing their greatest manœuvres, display a force of will equal to that of the obscurest gambler. Ambition, love, passion, the heart, the mind, the sense of hearing, the sense of smell, the sense of touch, all the mainsprings of man's life, in fact, are united upon a single word, a single purpose, — gambling. And do not imagine that the gambler plays to win. He begins that way, but he ends by gambling for gambling's sake, in order to see the cards, to handle gold, to feel the strange emotions that have not their like in any of the other passions of life, emotions which, in the face of gain or loss, — those two poles from one to the other of which the gambler flies with the speed of the wind, one of which burns like fire and the other freezes like ice, — cause his heart to leap within his breast under the stimulus of desire or reality, as a horse leaps under the spur; in order to absorb like a sponge all the faculties of the mind, to confine them and hold them in check, and, when the hand is played, to release them abruptly only to seize them again with more force than before.

The one circumstance that makes the passion for gambling stronger than all other passions is that, as it is never satisfied, it can never grow weary. It is like a mistress who always promises and never gives. It kills, but it does not fatigue.

The passion for gambling is the hysteria of mankind.

To the gambler everything is dead, family, friends, country. His horizon is limited by the card and ball. His country is the chair he sits in, the green cloth on

which he leans. If he were condemned to the gridiron like St. Lawrence, and were allowed to gamble there, I am prepared to wager that he would not feel the fire, that he would not even turn his head.

The gambler is a silent creature. Words can be of no service to him. He plays, he wins, he loses. He is no longer a man; he is a machine. Why should he speak?

The uproar in the card-rooms did not come from the players, therefore, but from the croupiers, who raked in the gold and cried in nasal tones, —

"Make your bets!"

At that moment Hoffmann was no longer an observer. His passion had taken too full possession of him. Otherwise he could have made a whole series of interesting studies.

He glided rapidly through the spectators and reached the edge of the green cloth. He found himself between a man in a *carmagnole* who was standing, and an old man who was sitting down and making calculations on a piece of paper.

The old man, who had spent his life seeking a successful combination, was spending his last days in playing it, and his last louis in seeing it fail. The successful combination is as impossible to find as the soul.

Among the heads of the men, sitting and standing, appeared the heads of women who were leaning on their shoulders, dabbling their hands in their gold, and who, with unequalled dexterity, found a way to profit by the winnings of some and the losses of others.

Seeing the cups filled with gold and the pyramids of silver, one would have found it hard to believe that the public destitution was so great and that gold was so dear.

The man in the *carmagnole* tossed a bundle of papers on a number.

"Fifty francs," he said.

"What 's that?" asked the croupier, pulling in the papers with his rake, and taking them up with the ends of his fingers.

"*Assignats*," the man replied.

"Have n't you any other money than that?" said the croupier.

"No, citizen."

"Then you can give somebody else your place."

"Why so?"

"Because we don't take that stuff."

"It 's government money."

"So much the better for the government if it can use it! We don't want it."

"Upon my word!" rejoined the man, taking up his *assignats*, "this is a wretched kind of money; you can't even lose it."

He walked away, crumpling the *assignats* in his hands.

"Make your bets!" cried the croupier.

Hoffmann was a gambler, as we know; but this time he played, not for the sake of playing, but for the money.

The fever that consumed him kept his thoughts boiling in his mind like water in a kettle.

"A hundred thalers on 26!" he cried.

The croupier scrutinized the German money as he had scrutinized the *assignats*. "Go and change it," he said to Hoffmann. "We take only French money."

Hoffmann ran downstairs like a madman, entered the shop of a money-changer who happened to be a German himself, and exchanged his three hundred thalers for French gold, that is to say, for about forty louis.

The wheel had turned three times meanwhile.

"Fifteen louis on 26!" he cried, rushing to the table, and clinging, with the gambler's extraordinary superstition, to the number he had chosen at first by chance, simply because the man with the *assignats* had tried to bet upon it.

"No more bets!" cried the croupier.

The ball went on its way.

Hoffmann's neighbor picked up two handfuls of gold and tossed them into his hat, which he held between his legs, but the croupier raked in Hoffmann's fifteen louis and many others.

Number 16 had won.

Hoffmann felt the cold perspiration overspread his brow like a net with steel meshes.

"Fifteen louis on 26!" he repeated.

Other voices called out other numbers, and the wheel turned once more.

On that turn the bank won everything. The ball rolled into the zero.

"Ten louis on 26!" muttered Hoffmann in a choking voice; but, thinking better of it, he said, "no, only nine," and took back one gold piece in order to have one more chance to play, one last hope.

Number 30 won.

The gold was swept from the cloth like the waves that beat high upon the shore, and are swept back into the sea.

Hoffmann, whose heart was beating fiercely, and who saw through the mists in his brain Arsène's mocking smile and Antonia's sad features, — Hoffmann, we say, with trembling hand, placed his last louis upon 26.

The bets were made in a moment.

"No more bets!" cried the croupier.

Hoffmann followed with a gleaming eye the rolling ball, as if it were his own life that was rolling over and over before his eyes.

Suddenly he threw himself back, hiding his face in his hands.

Not only had he lost, but he had not a single sou about his person or at his lodgings.

A woman who sat near by, and who would have sold herself for twenty francs a moment before, uttered a fierce cry of joy and picked up a handful of gold she had won.

Hoffmann would have given ten years of his life for one of that woman's louis.

With a movement swifter than thought he felt and searched his pockets, as if to banish all doubt as to the truth.

His pockets were empty, but he felt something round, like a piece of money against his breast, and eagerly seized it.

It was Antonia's locket, which he had forgotten.

"I am saved!" he cried; and he threw the locket as a stake upon number 26.

XVI.

THE LOCKET.

The croupier took the locket and examined it.

"Monsieur," he said to Hoffmann, for they still said monsieur at 113, "monsieur, go and sell this if you choose, and make your bet in money; but, I tell you once more, we take nothing but gold or silver coin."

Hoffmann took his locket and left the room without uttering a syllable.

During the time that it took him to go down the stairs many thoughts, many plans, many presentiments buzzed around him; but he turned a deaf ear to all those vague sounds, and went directly to the same money-changer who had just given him louis for his thalers.

The good man was reading, lying back comfortably in his leather-covered arm-chair, with his spectacles perched on the end of his nose. He was reading by the uncertain light of a low lamp, reenforced by the yellow glitter of the gold pieces in their copper receptacles, and he was protected by a lattice of fine iron wire, with little green silk curtains, and a little wicket, only large enough for the hand to pass through, on a level with the table.

Hoffmann had never felt such an overpowering admiration for gold.

He opened his eyes, marvelling greatly, as if he had stepped into a sunbeam, and yet he had just seen more gold on the roulette table than he saw there; but it was not the same kind of gold, philosophically speaking.

Between the noisy, swift-moving, excited gold at number 113, and the tranquil, silent, serious gold at the money-changer's, there was the same difference that there is between vapid, empty-headed chatterers and men of thought and meditation. A man can do no good with the gold won at roulette or cards. It does not belong to him in whose possession it is, but he belongs to it. Coming from a corrupt source, it must serve an impure end. It has life in it, but it is a vicious life, and it is in haste to be gone as it came. It counsels naught but vice, and, when it does do good, does it against its will. It arouses longings ten times, twenty times greater than it can satisfy, and, when you once possess it, it seems to diminish in value. In a word, the money of the gaming-table always has a fictitious value, depending upon whether one wins or longs to win or loses. Sometimes a handful of gold represents nothing; sometimes a single coin contains a man's life; whereas the gold of commerce, the gold of the money-changer, gold like that which Hoffmann went to his compatriot to obtain, is always worth its face value. It leaves its copper nest only in exchange for something of equal or superior value to itself. It does not prostitute itself by passing from hand to hand like a courtesan without shame, without preference, without love. It has respect for itself. When it has once left the money-changer's hands it may become corrupted; it may keep bad company, as it may have done before going there, but while it is there it is respectable and deserving of consideration. It is the image of need and not of caprice. You earn it; you do not win it. It is not tossed about like mere counters by the croupiers, but is slowly and carefully counted, piece by piece, by the broker, with all the respect that is its due. It is silent.

and in that its great eloquence consists; and so Hoffmann, through whose imagination a comparison of this sort flashed in a moment's time, began to tremble lest the broker should refuse to give him such genuine gold for his locket. He deemed himself obliged, therefore, although it involved a loss of valuable time, to resort to periphrases and circumlocution to arrive at his goal, especially as he had not come to propose a business transaction to the money-changer, but to ask a favor at his hands.

"Monsieur," he said, "I came here a short time ago to exchange thalers for louis."

"Yes, monsieur, I recognize you," said the money-changer.

"You are a German?"

"I am from Heidelberg."

"That is where I studied."

"What a beautiful town!"

"It is, indeed."

Meanwhile Hoffmann's blood was boiling. It seemed to him that every moment he gave to that commonplace conversation was a year of his life thrown away.

He continued, therefore, with a smile, —

"I thought that perhaps you would be willing, being a fellow-countryman, to do me a favor."

"What is it?" asked the money-changer, his face clouding at the word. The money-changer is no more of a lender than the ant.

"To loan me three louis on this gold locket."

As he spoke, Hoffmann handed the locket to the broker, who put it in his scales and weighed it.

"Would n't you prefer to sell it?" he asked.

"Oh! no," cried Hoffmann; "it is bad enough to pawn it. I will even venture to ask you, if you do me

this favor, to keep the locket with the greatest care, for I care more for it than for my life, and I shall come and redeem it to-morrow. Nothing less serious than my present circumstances would induce me to pawn it."

"Then I will loan you three louis."

And the money-changer, with all the gravity that such an act seemed to him to require, took three louis and placed them in front of Hoffmann.

"Oh! thanks, thanks a thousand times!" cried Hoffmann, as he pounced upon the three gold pieces and disappeared.

The money-changer silently resumed his reading, after placing the locket in a corner of his drawer. It had never occurred to him to go and venture his gold against other gold at 113.

The gambler is so near being a sacrilegist that Hoffmann, as he tossed his first piece of gold upon number 26, — for he proposed to risk only one at a time, — pronounced the name of Antonia.

While the ball was rolling Hoffmann was not excited. Something told him that he should win.

Number 26 came up.

Hoffmann, beaming with joy, gathered up thirty-six louis.

The first thing that he did was to put three of them aside in his watch-pocket, in order to be sure that he could redeem his fiancée's locket, for he evidently owed his first gains to her. He left thirty-three louis on the same number, and the same number came up. Therefore he won thirty-three times thirty-six, or eleven hundred and eighty-eight louis, that is to say, nearly twenty-five thousand francs.

Thereupon Hoffmann plunged his hands into that solid Pactolus, and, taking it up by handfuls, played

at random, blinded as if by a dazzling light. At every play that he made, his heap of winnings increased, like a mountain suddenly rising from the water.

He had gold in his pockets, in his coat, in his waistcoat, in his hat, in his hands, on the table, everywhere. Gold rolled to him from the croupier's hands like blood from a gaping wound. He had become the Jupiter of all the Danaës in the room, and the treasurer of all the unlucky players.

At last, when he thought that he had enough, he picked up all the gold in front of him and fled in the direction of Arsène's house, leaving all his fellow-gamblers full of admiration and envy.

It was one o'clock in the morning; but it mattered little to him.

It seemed to him that with such wealth he might come at any hour of the night and always be sure of a welcome.

He gloated over the thought of covering with all that gold the beautiful body which had unveiled itself before him, and which, although it had remained as cold as marble to his love, would awake to life before his wealth, like the statue modelled by Prometheus when he had found its animating principle.

He proposed to go to Arsène, to empty his pockets to the last piece, and say to her, "Now, love me." Then, the next day, he would leave Paris, in order to escape, if possible, the memory of that intense, feverish dream.

He knocked at Arsène's door like a master returning to his own house.

The door opened.

Hoffmann ran to the stairs.

"Who is that?" cried the concierge's voice.

Hoffmann did not reply.

"Where are you going, citizen?" said the same voice; and a ghost, dressed as ghosts are at night, came out of the lodge and ran after Hoffmann.

In those days people were very fond of knowing who went out and especially who came in.

"I am going to Mademoiselle Arsène's," replied Hoffmann, tossing the concierge three or four louis, for which an hour earlier he would have sold his soul.

That method of expression was very satisfactory to the official.

"Mademoiselle Arsène is no longer here, monsieur," he replied, deeming it advisable to use some other word than "citizen" when he had to do with so open-handed a man. A man who asks may say, "citizen;" but a man who receives can say only "monsieur."

"What!" cried Hoffmann, "Arsène not here?"

"No, monsieur."

"You mean that she has n't come home this evening?"

"I mean that she won't come any more."

"Where is she, then?"

"I have no idea."

"*Mein Gott! mein Gott!*" exclaimed Hoffmann; and he took his head in his hands as if to hold back his reason, which was on the point of escaping him. Everything that had happened to him of late was so extraordinary that he kept saying to himself, "There, now I am going mad!"

"Have n't you heard the news?" said the concierge.

"What news?"

"Monsieur Danton has been arrested."

"When?"

"Yesterday. It was Monsieur Robespierre who did it. A great man, Citizen Robespierre!"

"Well?"

"Well, Mademoiselle Arsène was obliged to fly; for, as Danton's mistress, she was likely to be compromised in the affair."

"True. But how did she fly?"

"As one flies when one is afraid of having his head cut off, — straight before her."

"Thanks, my friend, thanks," said Hoffmann; and he disappeared, leaving a few more gold pieces in the concierge's hand.

When he was in the street, Hoffmann asked himself the question, what was going to become of him, and of what use all his gold was to him now; for, as may be imagined, the idea that he could find Arsène never occurred to him, any more than the idea of going home and taking some rest.

So he too began to walk straight before him, making the pavements of the deserted streets ring beneath his heels, wide awake, and yet dreaming a painful dream.

It was a cold night. The trees were bare and shivered in the night wind, like sick men in delirium who have left their beds, and whose wasted limbs are shaken by fever.

The frost stung the faces of the few nocturnal passers-by, and only at long intervals was the darkness pierced by a light in a window of one of the houses whose black masses could hardly be distinguished from the sky.

But the cold air had a salutary effect upon him. His heart expanded gradually in that rapid walk, and, if we may so express ourselves, his mental effervescence was volatilized. In a room he would have stifled. And then, perhaps, if he went on and on, he might fall in with Arsène. Who could say? Perhaps when she fled from her house she had gone in the same direction as he.

He walked the whole length of the deserted boulevard and through Rue Royale, as if, knowing that his eyes did not see, his feet had recognized the place where he was. He raised his head, and stopped when he saw that he was going straight toward Place de la Révolution, toward the square to which he had taken an oath never to return.

Dark as was the sky, a silhouette that was even darker stood out against the inky horizon. It was the silhouette of the ghastly machine, whose mouth, wet with blood, was dried by the night wind as it slept, awaiting the coming of its daily quota of victims.

It was by daylight that Hoffmann did not want to see the square. It was because of the blood that flowed there that he desired to avoid it; but at night it was a different matter. To the poet, in whom, despite all that had passed, the poetic instinct was still awake, it was intensely interesting to see and to touch with his hands, in the silence and darkness, the sinister scaffolding whose blood-stained image must have haunted many minds at that period.

What more striking contrast to the tumultuous gambling hell he had just left, than that deserted square whose perpetual guest was the grim scaffold! by day, the spectacle of death; at night, solitude, insensibility!

So Hoffmann walked toward the guillotine as if drawn thither by a magnetic force.

Suddenly, and almost without knowing how it had come about, he found himself face to face with it.

The wind was whistling through the boards.

Hoffmann folded his arms across his breast and looked.

How many thoughts must have been born in the mind of that young man, who, with his pockets filled with

gold, after reckoning upon a night of debauchery, was passing the night alone beside a scaffold!

It seemed to him, in the midst of his reverie, as if a human groan were mingled with the sighing of the wind.

He leaned his head forward and listened.

The groan was repeated, not at a distance, but near the ground.

He looked about and saw no one.

Meanwhile a third groan reached his ears.

"One would say it was a woman's voice," he muttered, "and it seems to come from beneath the scaffold."

Stooping down, in order to see better, he began to make the circuit of the guillotine. As he passed the terrible ladder, his foot stumbled against something. He put out his hands and touched a human body, dressed entirely in black, crouching on the lower step.

"Who are you, who sleep beside a scaffold at night?" asked Hoffmann.

And as he spoke he knelt in order to see the face of the person to whom he was speaking.

But she did not stir. Her elbows were resting on her knees, and her head upon her hands.

Despite the bitter cold her shoulders were almost entirely bare, and Hoffmann could see a black line around her white neck.

That line was a velvet necklace.

"Arsène!" he cried.

"Ah! yes, I am Arsène!" muttered the crouching woman in a strange voice, as she raised her head and looked at Hoffmann.

XVII.

A HOTEL ON RUE SAINT-HONORÉ.

HOFFMANN recoiled in terror. Despite the voice, despite the face, he still doubted. But Arsène raised her head and let her hands fall upon her knees, thus uncovering her neck and disclosing the curious diamond clasp that secured the ends of the velvet necklace; and it sparkled in the darkness.

"Arsène! Arsène!" Hoffmann repeated.

Arsène rose.

"What are you doing here at this hour," the young man asked, "clad in this black dress, with your shoulders bare."

"He was taken away yesterday," Arsène replied. "They came to arrest me too. I fled just as I was, and to-night, as my room seemed too small and my bed too cold, I came out at eleven o'clock and found my way here."

The words were uttered in a strange voice, without inflection, without gestures. They issued from pallid lips which opened and closed as if by a spring. One would have said that an automaton was speaking.

"But you cannot remain here!" cried Hoffmann.

"Where should I go? I cannot return to the place I came from, until the last moment. It was too cold."

"Then come with me," cried Hoffmann.

"With you!" exclaimed Arsène.

And it seemed to the young man that a disdainful glance fell upon him in the starlight from that dull eye,

like the glance that had crushed him in the lovely boudoir on Rue de Hanovre.

"I am rich; I have gold," cried Hoffmann.

The dancer's eye flashed.

"Come," she said, "but where?"

"*Where?*"

Indeed, *where* was he to take that woman of luxurious, voluptuous tastes, who, when she had left the magnificent palaces and enchanted gardens of the Opéra, was accustomed to walk upon Persian carpets and to recline upon Indian cashmeres?

Certainly he could not take her to his little student's chamber. She would be as stifled and as cold there as in the unknown abode of which she just spoke, and to which she seemed to dread to return.

"Where, indeed?" said Hoffmann. "I am a stranger in Paris."

"I will show you where to go," said Arsène.

"Oh! yes, yes," cried Hoffmann.

"Follow me."

She started off in front of him at a swift, automatic gait which had nothing in common with the charming suppleness he had admired in the dancer.

It did not occur to the young man to offer her his arm. He followed her.

Arsène turned into Rue Royale, which was called at that time Rue de la Révolution, turned to the right into Rue Saint-Honoré, which was called Rue Honoré without the prefix, stopped in front of a magnificent hotel and rang.

The door was opened at once.

The concierge gazed at Arsène in open-mouthed amazement.

"Speak to him," she said to the young man, "or they

won't let me go in, and I shall be obliged to return to my seat at the foot of the guillotine."

"My friend," said Hoffmann, hastily, passing between the concierge and the young woman, "as I was passing along Champs-Élysées, I heard some one calling for help. I ran up in time to prevent madame from being murdered, but too late to prevent her being robbed. Give me your best room at once. Have a great fire lighted in it, and serve a good supper. Here 's a louis for you."

He cast a louis d'or on the table on which the lamp stood, and all the rays of light seemed to concentrate on the gleaming features of Louis XV.

A louis was a large sum at that time. It represented nine hundred and twenty-five francs in *assignats*.

The concierge removed his dirty cap and rang. A waiter answered the bell.

"Quick! quick! a room, the best in the house, for monsieur and madame!"

"For monsieur and madame," repeated the waiter, staring in open-mouthed wonder at Hoffmann's more than simple dress and Arsène's more than airy costume, one after the other.

"Yes," said Hoffmann, "the best, the finest; and above all things let it be well warmed and well lighted. Here 's a louis for you."

The waiter seemed to undergo the same influence as the concierge, bowed before the louis, and pointed to a grand staircase, which was but half-lighted because of the advanced hour of the night, but which was carpeted from top to bottom, — a most unusual extravagance at that period.

"Go up," he said, "and wait at the door of number three."

With that he disappeared.

On the first stair Arsène stopped.

Light-footed sylph though she was, she seemed to find an insuperable difficulty in lifting her foot. You would have said that her thin satin shoes were soled with lead.

Hoffmann offered her his arm. Arsène rested her hand upon it, and although he did not feel the weight of her hand, he was conscious of a sensation of cold from the contact.

With a violent effort Arsène mounted the first stair and the others in succession; but every stair extorted a sigh from her.

"O poor girl!" murmured Hoffmann. "How you must have suffered!"

"Yes, yes," replied Arsène, "I have suffered much."

They reached the door of number three. But the waiter arrived almost as soon as they, bringing a veritable brazier. He opened the door and in an instant a fire was blazing on the hearth, and the candles were lighted.

"You must be hungry, are you not?" Hoffmann asked.

"I don't know," was the reply.

"The best supper you can give us, boy," said Hoffmann.

"Monsieur," said the waiter, "people don't say *boy* nowadays, but *official*. However, monsieur pays so handsomely, that he can say what he chooses."

Delighted with his own wit, he went out, saying, —

"Supper will be ready in five minutes."

When the door had closed behind him, Hoffmann turned and looked at Arsène.

She was in such haste to be near the fire that she had not time to draw an easy-chair to the hearth. She

simply crouched in front of it, in the same position in which Hoffmann had found her in front of the guillotine; and there, her elbows resting on her knees, she seemed intent upon holding her head straight upon her shoulders with both hands.

"Arsène, Arsène!" said the young man. "I told you that I was rich, did I not? Look, and you will see that I did not lie."

He began by emptying his hat upon the table. It was filled with louis and double louis, and they poured from it on the marble with the peculiar ringing sound that is so easily distinguished from all other sounds.

Then he emptied his pockets, which, one after another, disgorged the enormous plunder he had bagged at the gaming-table.

A heap of restless, resplendent gold pieces covered the table.

Arsène seemed to come to life at the sound. She turned her head, and what she saw seemed to complete the resurrection begun by what she had heard.

She rose, still stiff and rigid; but her pale lips smiled, her glassy eyes lighted up and shot forth rays that blended with the rays of the gold.

"Oh!" said she. "Is all that yours?"

"No, not mine, but yours, Arsène."

"Mine!" exclaimed the dancer.

She plunged her bloodless hands into the heap of metal. Her arms disappeared to the elbow, and she, whose very life gold had been, seemed to live again at the touch of gold.

"Mine," she said, "mine!" and she uttered the words in a quivering, metallic tone that blended in a most extraordinary way with the chink of the louis.

Two waiters entered, bringing a table all set, which

they were near dropping when they espied the mass of riches the young woman was kneading in her clinched hands.

"Very good," said Hoffmann. "Bring some champagne and leave us."

The waiters brought several bottles of champagne and withdrew.

Hoffmann closed the door behind them and locked it.

Then, his eyes glowing with desire, he returned to Arsène, whom he found standing at the table, renewing her life, not in the fountain of Youth, but in that yellow Pactolus.

"Well!" he said inquiringly.

"Gold is beautiful!" she said. "It is long since I touched any."

"Come and sup," said Hoffmann, "and after supper, if you choose, O Danaë, you shall bathe in gold at your ease."

He led her to the table.

"I am cold!" she said.

Hoffmann looked about the room. There were red damask curtains to the bed and at the windows. He tore a curtain from the window and gave it to Arsène.

She wrapped herself in the curtain, which seemed to drape itself about her in graceful folds like the cloaks worn by the ancient Greeks, and her pale face, surrounded by that red drapery, seemed doubly pale.

Hoffmann was almost afraid.

He took his place at the table, poured and drank two or three glasses of champagne in rapid succession. Thereupon it seemed to him that a slight flush overspread Arsène's cheeks.

He poured wine for her, and she too drank. Then he tried to make her eat, but she refused.

"I could not swallow," she said, when Hoffmann insisted.

"Let us drink then."

"Yes, let us drink," she said, holding out her glass.

Hoffmann was hungry as well as thirsty. He ate and drank.

He drank especially hard. He felt that he needed courage, not that Arsène, as in her own home, seemed disposed to resist him either by force or by contempt, but because there seemed to be an ice-cold emanation from his lovely companion's body.

As he drank, Arsène, in his eyes at least, became more animated; but when she emptied her glass, several red drops rolled from beneath the velvet necklace and trickled down upon the dancer's breast. Hoffmann watched them without understanding; but, feeling that there was some terrible mystery beneath it all, he combated his internal tremors by multiplying toasts to her lovely eyes, her lovely mouth, her lovely hands.

She honored his toasts, drinking as much as he, and seeming to derive animation, not from the wine she drank herself, but from the wine that Hoffmann drank.

Suddenly a stick fell from the fire.

Hoffmann followed with his eyes the blazing brand, which did not stop until it touched Arsène's bare foot. She had removed her shoes and stockings, the better to warm herself, and her little foot, white as marble, rested on the marble hearth, which too was as white as the foot, and seemed to be cut from the same block.

Hoffmann cried out.

"Arsène! Arsène! take care!" he said.

"Of what?" she asked.

"That piece of wood — that wood against your foot."

The brand did, in fact, half cover Arsène's foot.

"Take it away," she said calmly.

Hoffmann stooped, picked up the brand, and discovered, to his intense surprise, that it had not burned the girl's foot, but that the foot had extinguished the flame.

"Let us drink!" said he.

"Let us drink!" said Arsène.

She held out her glass.

The second bottle was empty.

But Hoffmann began to feel that the intoxication of wine was not enough.

His eye fell upon a piano.

"Good!" he exclaimed.

He realized the resource opened to him by the intoxication of music.

He darted to the piano.

Beneath his fingers came forth as naturally as possible the air to which Arsène had danced the *pas de trois* in the opera of the "Judgment of Paris," when he first saw her.

But it seemed to Hoffmann as if the chords of the piano were of steel. The single instrument produced a volume of sound equal to a whole orchestra.

"Ah!" said Hoffmann, "this is glorious!"

He had found in that sound the intoxication he sought.

Arsène rose as he struck the first chords. They seemed to envelop her whole person like a network of flame.

She threw aside the red damask curtain, and, strange to say, just as a magic transformation scene is carried out on the stage, no one knows how, so a transformation took place in her costume, and instead of her black dress and bare shoulders, she appeared in the costume of Flore, bedecked with flowers, enveloped in clouds of gauze, and trembling with excitement.

Hoffmann uttered a sharp exclamation, then played

on with redoubled energy, until the resonant steel muscles in the breast of the instrument seemed instinct with supernatural force.

Thereupon the same hallucination spread confusion in Hoffmann's mind. That pirouetting creature, who had become animated by slow degrees, exerted an irresistible power of attraction over him. She had taken for her stage all the space between the piano and the alcove, and her figure stood out like an apparition from hell against the red background of the bed-curtains. Whenever she returned from the end of the room toward Hoffmann, he rose from his chair. Whenever she moved away from him again, he felt something drawing him after her. At last, — and Hoffmann had no idea how it came about, — the movement changed under his fingers. He no longer played the air he had heard at the Opéra, but a waltz; that waltz was Beethoven's "Desire." It had come naturally to his fingers as an expression of his thought. Arsène too had changed the time of her dance. At first she turned round and round in the same spot, then gradually enlarged the circle she described, and drew nearer and nearer to Hoffmann. Hoffmann, breathing hard, felt her coming, felt her drawing near. He realized that at last she would touch him, and that then he could not resist rising in his turn and taking part in that wild waltz.

He was conscious of a sensation of terror mingled with his passion. At last Arsène, as she passed, put out her hand, and touched him with the ends of her fingers. Hoffmann uttered a cry, jumped as if touched by an electric spark, darted after the dancer, overtook her, threw his arms around her waist, continuing in his thought the air he had ceased to play, clasping to his heart that body which had regained its elasticity, seek-

ing a glance from her eyes, the breath from her mouth, devouring her with kisses; whirling about, no longer in respirable air, but in an atmosphere of flame which penetrated to the deepest recesses of their being, until at last they fell exhausted.

When Hoffmann awoke the next morning, one of the dull days peculiar to a Parisian winter had begun its course, and the light entered the room through the window from which the curtain had been removed. He looked about him, not knowing where he was, and felt a lifeless mass pressing against his left arm. He leaned in the direction from which the numbness that assailed his heart seemed to come, and recognized, lying across the bed, not the lovely danseuse of the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre, but the pallid-faced girl of Place de la Révolution.

Thereupon he remembered everything, and, seeing that the body lay perfectly still, he seized a candlestick in which five candles were still burning, and by their light and the light of day combined, discovered that her face was white and her eyes closed.

His first idea was that fatigue had been too much for her, and that she had fainted. He took her hand; it was as cold as ice. He put his hand over her heart; her heart had ceased to beat.

Thereupon a ghastly thought passed through his mind. He pulled violently at the bell-cord, which broke in his hands. He rushed to the door, opened it, and darted down the stairs, crying, —

"Help! help!"

A little man dressed in black was ascending the stairs at the same moment. He raised his head. Hoffmann looked at him and uttered a cry. He had recognized the physician of the Opéra.

"Ah! is it you, my dear monsieur?" said the doctor as he recognized Hoffmann. "What is the matter, why all this outcry?"

"Oh! come, come," said Hoffmann, not taking the time to explain to his friend what he expected of him, but hoping that the sight of Arsène's inanimate form would have more effect on him than anything he could say. "Come!"

He led him into the room, dragged him to the bed with one hand, and with the other seized the candlestick and held it to Arsène's face.

"Look," he said.

But the doctor, far from manifesting any excitement or dismay, said calmly, —

"Ah! it was well done of you, young man; it was well done of you to redeem the body so that it might not rot in the common trench. Very well done, young man! very well done!"

"The body," muttered Hoffmann, "redeemed, — the common trench! In God's name, what are you talking about?"

"I say that our poor Arsène was arrested yesterday at eight o'clock in the morning, was tried yesterday at two o'clock in the afternoon, and was executed yesterday at four o'clock in the afternoon."

Hoffmann thought that he was going mad. He seized the doctor by the throat.

"Executed yesterday at four o'clock!" he cried, as if he himself were being strangled, "Arsène executed!"

He laughed aloud, but his laugh was so strange, so strident, so utterly distinct from all the ordinary modulations of the human voice, that the doctor glanced at him with something like terror in his eyes.

"Do you doubt it?" he asked.

"What!" cried Hoffmann, "do I doubt it? I should say so. I supped and waltzed with her last night."

"If that is so, it 's an interesting case, and one to be noted in the annals of medicine. You will sign a statement of the facts, won't you?"

"But I cannot sign, for I say that you lie. I say it is impossible; I say it is not so."

"Ah! you say that it is not so," rejoined the doctor. "You say that to me, the physician to the prisons; to me, who did all that I could do to save her and failed; to me who bade her adieu when she mounted the tumbril! You say that it is not so! Wait!"

Thereupon the doctor put out his hand, pressed a spring in the diamond clasp that held the velvet necklace in place, and removed the ribbon.

Hoffmann uttered a terrible cry. No longer supported by the only bond that attached it to the shoulders, the head fell from the bed to the floor, and did not stop until it touched Hoffmann's shoe, even as the brand had not stopped until it touched Arsène's foot.

The young man recoiled, and rushed down the stairs, shrieking, —

"I am mad!"

There was no exaggeration in his exclamation. The slight partition separating sanity from insanity in the poet who exercises his cerebral faculties beyond measure, — that slight partition that sometimes seems ready to break, cracked in his brain with a noise like that made by a wall as it settles.

In those days people did not run far through the streets of Paris without telling why they were running. The Parisians had become very inquisitive in the year of grace 1793, and whenever a man was seen running,

he was stopped in order that he might tell whom he was running after or who was running after him.

So it fell out that Hoffmann was stopped in front of the Church of the Assumption, which had been turned into a guard-house, and was taken before the commanding officer of the post.

There Hoffmann awoke to a realizing sense of the real danger of his position. Some took him for an aristocrat who had adopted that gait in order to reach the frontier more quickly. Others cried: "Down with the agent of Pitt and Coburg!" Some shouted: "To the nearest lamp-post!" which was not cheerful. Others: "To the Revolutionary Tribunal!" which was less cheerful still. People sometimes were saved from the lamp-post, witness Abbé Maury; but from the Revolutionary Tribunal, never!

Thereupon Hoffmann tried to explain what had happened to him since the previous evening. He told of his visit to the gambling-house and his winnings. He told how, with pockets filled with gold, he had hurried to Rue de Hanovre; how the woman he sought was no longer there; how, under the sway of the passion that consumed him, he had traversed the streets of Paris; how, as he crossed Place de la Révolution, he had found the woman he sought sitting at the foot of the guillotine; how she had taken him to a hotel in Rue Saint-Honoré, how they had danced and supped together, and how he had found, not a dead woman merely, but a headless woman, in the room that morning.

All this was very improbable, and Hoffmann's story gained little credence. The most fanatical partisans of truth called it a lie, the more moderate called it madness.

At this juncture one of those present conceived this method of throwing light on the question.

"You passed the night, you say, at a hotel on Rue Saint-Honoré?"

"Yes."

"You emptied your pockets, which were filled with gold, upon a table there?"

"Yes."

"You took supper there with the woman whose head, when it fell at your feet, caused the extraordinary terror under which you were laboring when we arrested you?"

"Yes."

"Very well! Let us look for the hotel. We probably shall not find the gold now, but we shall find the woman."

"Yes, yes," cried everybody. "Let us look for the hotel!"

Hoffmann would have been very glad not to go, but he had no choice but to obey the enthusiastic determination that followed the suggestion.

So he left the church and retraced his steps down Rue Saint-Honoré.

It was not a long distance from the Church of the Assumption to Rue Royale. And yet Hoffmann looked in vain, first carelessly, then with more attention, and at last with a very earnest desire to find what he sought. He saw nothing that reminded him of the hotel he had entered the night before, where he had passed the night, and which he had left a few moments before. Like the enchanted palaces that vanish when the stage-machinist has no further need of them, the hotel on Rue Saint-Honoré had utterly disappeared after the ghastly scene we have tried to describe had been played.

All this did not satisfy the fools who had accompanied

Hoffmann, and who were determined to reach some result that would compensate them for the trouble they had taken. Such a result could be attained only by the finding of Arsène's body or by the arrest of Hoffmann as a suspicious person.

As they failed to find Arséne's body, they were seriously discussing the advisability of arresting Hoffmann, when he suddenly spied the little man in black, and appealed to him for help, invoking his testimony to the truth of the story he had told.

The voice of a physician always has a great influence on the multitude. The little man mentioned his profession, and was allowed to approach Hoffmann.

"Ah! poor fellow!" he said, taking his hand on the pretext of feeling his pulse, but really to urge him, by a significant pressure, not to contradict what he said. "Poor fellow! so he has escaped!"

"Escaped from where? escaped from what?" cried twenty voices in chorus.

"Yes, escaped from where?" demanded Hoffmann, refusing to accept the means of salvation the doctor offered him, which he considered humiliating.

"*Parbleu!* from the hospital," said the doctor.

"From the hospital!" cried the crowd. "What hospital?"

"The insane hospital!"

"O doctor, doctor!" cried Hoffmann; "no jesting!"

"The poor devil," cried the doctor, apparently heedless of Hoffmann's interruption, "the poor devil has lost some woman that he loved on the scaffold, it seems."

"Oh! yes, yes," cried Hoffmann. "I did love her well, but not as I love Antonia."

"Poor boy!" said several women who were standing by, and who began to feel compassion for Hoffmann.

"Yes, since then," continued the doctor, "he has been the victim of a terrible hallucination. He imagines that he is gambling. He imagines that he wins. When he has won, he imagines that he will be able to buy the woman he loves. He runs through the streets with his gold. He finds a woman at the foot of the guillotine and takes her to some superb palace, some magnificent hotel, where he passes the night drinking and singing and dancing with her; and after that he finds her dead. Is n't that what he told you?"

"Yes, yes," cried the crowd, "word for word."

"Very good! very good!" said Hoffmann, with a gleaming eye. "Will you say that it 's not true, doctor, when you were the one who unfastened the diamond clasp that held the velvet necklace? Oh! I ought to have suspected something when I saw the champagne ooze from under the necklace, when I saw the burning wood fall on her bare foot, and that bare foot, that dead foot extinguish it instead of being burned by it."

"You see," said the doctor, with an expression of deep sympathy and in a sad voice, "his mad fit is coming on again."

"What 's that, my mad fit!" cried Hoffmann. "Do you dare to say that it is not true? You dare to say that I did not sup last night with Arsène who was guillotined yesterday! You dare to say that her velvet necklace was n't the only thing that kept her head on her shoulders! You dare to say that, when you unfastened the clasp and removed the velvet, the head did not fall on the carpet! Nonsense, doctor, nonsense; you know very well that what I say is true."

"You are convinced now, my friends, are n't you?" said the doctor.

"Yes, yes," cried a score of voices in the crowd, and those who said nothing nodded their heads sadly in token of assent.

"Very well, then," said the doctor, "call a cab so that I can take him back."

"Back where?" cried Hoffmann. "Where do you propose to take me?"

"Where?" said the doctor; "why, to the madhouse that you have just escaped from, my good friend. *Morbleu!* let me do what I say," he added in an undertone, "or I won't answer for your safety. These people will think that you have been laughing at them, and they 'll tear you to pieces."

Hoffmann sighed and let his arms fall.

"There, you see," said the doctor, "now he 's as gentle as a lamb. The paroxysm has passed. There, my friend, there, there!" And the doctor pretended to soothe Hoffmann by patting him, as one soothes an excited horse or an angry dog.

Meanwhile a cab had been summoned and had driven up.

"Get in quickly," said the doctor to Hoffmann.

Hoffmann obeyed. He had exhausted all his strength in the struggle.

"To Bicêtre!" said the doctor aloud, as he entered the cab behind Hoffmann.

"Where do you want to be put down?" he asked the young man in an undertone.

"At the Palais-Égalité," said Hoffmann, almost inaudibly.

"Off you go, driver," cried the doctor.

Then he waved his hand to the crowd.

"Long live the doctor!" they cried.

The crowd, when it is under the sway of any passion, is always impelled to cry long live some one, or down with some one.

At the Palais-Égalité the doctor called to the driver to stop.

"Adieu, young man," he said, "and if you take my advice you will start for Germany at the earliest possible moment. France is n't a good place for men with such imaginations as yours."

With that he pushed Hoffmann out of the cab, and Hoffmann, still dazed by what had happened, would have walked straight under the wheels of a wagon coming in the opposite direction, had not a young man who was passing darted forward and caught him in his arms, as the driver of the wagon, on his side, made an effort to stop his horses.

The cab went its way.

The two young men, he who had almost fallen, and he who had saved him, exclaimed in the same breath, —

"Hoffmann!"

"Werner!"

Observing his friend's prostration, Werner led him into the garden of the Palais-Royal.

Thereupon the memory of all that had recently taken place recurred to Hoffmann's mind more vividly than ever, and he remembered Antonia's locket, which he had pawned at the German money-changer's.

He exclaimed in dismay as he reflected that he had emptied all his pockets on the marble table at the hotel. But at the same instant he remembered that he had put three louis, with which to redeem the portrait, in his watch-pocket.

The pocket had loyally retained its treasure. The three louis were still there.

Hoffmann escaped from Werner's arms, crying, "Wait for me!" and hurried away in the direction of the money-changer's office.

At every step that he took it seemed to him as if he were emerging from a dense vapor, and advancing, through an ever-lightening cloud, toward a pure and resplendent atmosphere.

At the money-changer's door he paused to take breath. The old vision, the vision of the night had almost vanished.

Having recovered his breath he entered the shop.

The money-changer was in his place. The copper bowls were in their places.

At the noise made by Hoffmann in entering, the money-changer raised his head.

"Aha!" he said, "is it you, my young countryman? Faith! I confess that I did not expect to see you again."

"I trust that you don't say that because you have disposed of the locket!" cried Hoffmann.

"No, I promised you that I would keep it, and if I had been offered twenty-five louis for it instead of the three you owe me, the locket would not have left my shop."

"Here are the three louis," said Hoffmann, timidly. "But I confess that I am not able to pay you any interest."

"Interest for one night," said the money-changer, "nonsense, you are joking. Interest on three louis for one night, and from a fellow-countryman too! never!" And he handed him the locket.

"Thanks, mein herr," said Hoffmann. "And now,"

he added, with a sigh, "I must go and try to get some money to take me back to Mannheim."

"To Mannheim," said the money-changer. "Tell me, are you of Mannheim?"

"No, I am not of Mannheim, but I live at Mannheim. My promised bride is at Mannheim. She is waiting for me, and I am going back to Mannheim to marry her."

"Aha!" said the money-changer; and as the young man had his hand on the door-knob he added, —

"I wonder if you know an old friend of mine at Mannheim, a musician?"

"Named Gottlieb Murr?" cried Hoffmann.

"The same! Do you know him?"

"Do I know him! I should say so, as his daughter is to be my wife."

"Antonia?" cried the money-changer. "What do you say, young man? that you were returning to Mannheim to marry Antonia?"

"To be sure."

"In that case remain in Paris, for you would take a fruitless journey."

"Why so?"

"Because here is a letter from her father telling me that Antonia died suddenly, as she was playing the harp, eight days ago, at three o'clock in the afternoon."

It was the very day that Hoffmann had gone to Arsène's house to paint her portrait. It was the very hour when he had pressed his lips to her bare shoulder.

Deathly pale, trembling, crushed, Hoffmann opened the locket in order to put Antonia's image to his lips, but the ivory was as white and spotless as if it had never been touched by the brush of the painter.

Nothing of Antonia was left to Hoffmann, twice false to his oath, not even the image of her to whom he had sworn everlasting love.

Two hours later Hoffmann, accompanied by Werner and the worthy broker, took his place in the diligence for Mannheim, where he arrived just in time to follow to the cemetery the body of old Gottlieb Murr, who had prayed on his death-bed to be buried beside his dear Antonia.

BLANCHE DE BEAULIEU.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1793-1794.

General Alexandre Dumas, the author's father.
General Marceau, a young republican leader.
Maximilien Robespierre,
Saint-Just,
Collot d'Herbois,
Billaud-Varennes,
Robert Lindet,
Couthon,
Cambon,
Carnot,
Barrère,
} revolutionists.
Danton, leader of the Mountain.
Camille Desmoulins,
Philippaux,
Hérault de Séchelles,
Lacroix,
} adherents of Danton.
Hébert, of the Commune.
Delmar, representative of the people.
Carrier, proconsul at Nantes.
Blanche de Beaulieu, daughter of the Marquis de Beaulieu, a Vendean.
Tinguy, in the service of Marquis de Beaulieu.
The Curé of Sainte-Marie de Rhé, a Vendean priest.

BLANCHE DE BEAULIEU.

I.

Whoever, during the evening of December 15, 1793, had started from the little town of Clisson to go to the village of Saint-Crépin, and had halted on the crest of the mountain at whose foot flows the river La Moine, would have seen a curious spectacle on the other side of the valley.

In the first place, at the spot where his eyes would have sought the village among the trees, against an horizon already darkened by the twilight, he would have noticed three or four columns of smoke, which, isolated at their bases, joined as they spread out, swayed a moment like a bronzed dome, then, yielding gracefully to a damp, westerly breeze, floated to the eastward, confounded with the low-lying, hazy clouds. He would have seen the smoke redden slowly, then disappear altogether, while from the roofs of the houses sharp tongues of flame darted in its place with a dull roar, now twisting about in spiral columns, now bending and rising again like the mast of a ship. It would have seemed to him as if all the windows would open soon to vomit fire. From time to time, as a roof fell in, he would have heard a smothered crash, he would have

distinguished a more vivid flame, accompanied by myriads of sparks, and would have seen, in the blood-red light of the conflagration, arms glistening and a circle of soldiers extending around the village. He would have heard cries and laughter, and he would have said to himself in dismay, "God forgive me, an army is warming itself with a village!"

In fact, a republican brigade of twelve or fifteen hundred men had found the village of Saint-Crépin abandoned and had set fire to it.

It was not cruelty, it was one method of carrying on war, — a plan of campaign, like any other; experience proved that it was the only judicious one.

There was one isolated cottage, however, that was not burned; it seemed, indeed, as if all necessary precautions had been taken to prevent the fire reaching it. Two sentinels were on guard at the door, and every moment orderlies and aides-de-camp entered, coming out again almost immediately with orders.

He who issued the orders was a young man, apparently of some twenty to twenty-two years of age. Long, fair hair, parted on the forehead, fell in wavy locks on either side of his thin white cheeks; his whole face bore the imprint of that fatal melancholy that is stamped upon the brow of those who are destined to die young. The blue cloak in which he was enveloped did not conceal his person so thoroughly that you could not see the insignia of his rank, the epaulets of a general; but the epaulets were of wool, the republican officers having patriotically offered the Convention all the gold on their coats. He was leaning over a table on which a map was spread; he was marking thereon with a pencil, by the light of a lamp which paled in the glare of the conflagration, the road his troops were to follow. It was

General Marceau, who was destined to be killed three years later at Altenkirchen.

"Alexandre!" he said, half rising. "Alexandre! you everlasting sleeper, are you dreaming of Santo Domingo that you sleep so soundly?"

"What is it?" said the person thus apostrophized, springing to his feet with a start, his head almost touching the ceiling of the cabin; "what is it? is the enemy upon us?"

The words were uttered with a slight Creole accent, which preserved their sweetness despite their menacing tone.

"No; an order from General-in-Chief Westermann has arrived."

And while his colleague was reading the order, — for the person he addressed was his colleague, — Marceau gazed with childish curiosity at the muscular form of the herculean mulatto who stood before him.

He was a man of twenty-eight, with short, curly hair, dark complexion, open forehead, and white teeth, whose almost superhuman strength was known throughout the army, which had seen him, on a day of battle, cut through a helmet to the cuirass, and on a day of parade smother between his legs a horse that was running away with him. He also had not long to live; but, less fortunate than Marceau, he was fated to die far from the field of battle, poisoned by order of a king. It was General Alexandre Dumas; it was my father.

"Who brought you this order?" he asked.

"Delmar, the representative of the people."

"Very good. Where are the poor devils to assemble?"

"In a forest a league and a half from here. Look at the map! there 's the place."

"True; but on the map we don't see the ravines, the mountains, the felled trees, the thousand and one roads that run into and out of the right road, so that you can hardly tell where you are, even by daylight. Infernal country! And with it all it 's always so cold!"

"Look!" said Marceau, pushing the door open with his foot, and pointing to the burning village. "Go out and warm yourself! Well, what have you there, citizens?"

The last words were addressed to a group of soldiers, who, while searching for supplies, had discovered, in a sort of dog kennel adjoining the cottage, a Vendean peasant, who seemed to be so drunk that it was probable that he had not been able to accompany the people of the village when they abandoned it.

Let the reader imagine a farm laborer with a stupid face, long hair, a broad-brimmed hat, and a gray jacket; a creature made in man's image, but a degree below the beasts, — for it was evident that the mass lacked instinct. Marceau asked him a few questions; patois and wine made his replies unintelligible. He was about to turn him over as a plaything to the soldiers, when General Dumas suddenly ordered the cottage to be cleared, and the prisoner locked in there. He was still at the door; a soldier pushed him inside; he stumbled across the room and leaned against the wall, swayed unsteadily a moment on his half-bent legs, then fell heavily at full length, and lay motionless on the floor. A sentry was posted at the door, and they did not even take the trouble to close the window.

"In an hour we can march," said General Dumas to Marceau; "we have a guide."

"Who is he?"

"That man."

"Very good, if we want to start to-morrow. There 's twenty-four hours' sleep in what that rascal has drunk."

Dumas smiled.

"Come," he said. And he led his colleague to the shed where the peasant had been discovered. A thin partition separated it from the interior of the cabin, and the partition was plentifully supplied with cracks, which enabled one to see what was going on there, and must have made it possible to hear every word spoken by the two generals who had been there a moment before.

"And now," he added, lowering his voice, "look!"

Marceau obeyed, yielding to the ascendency his friend exerted over him, even in the ordinary affairs of life. He had some difficulty in distinguishing the prisoner, who, by accident, had fallen in the darkest corner of the cabin. He was still lying in the same place, absolutely motionless. Marceau turned to look for his colleague; he had disappeared.

When he looked back into the cabin it seemed to him that the man who occupied it had made a slight movement; his head was now in a position which enabled him to embrace the whole interior at a glance. Soon he opened his eyes, with the prolonged yawn of one just waking from sleep, and saw that he was alone.

A singular expression of satisfaction and intelligence passed over his face.

From that moment it became evident to Marceau that he would have been the man's dupe had not a keener glance than his divined the truth. He examined him, therefore, with renewed attention: his face had resumed its former expression, his eyes were closed, his movements were those of a man about to fall asleep again; in one of those movements he kicked the fragile table on

which lay the map and the order from General Westermann which Marceau had thrown down there; everything fell to the floor; one of the sentries opened the door and put his head in at the noise, saw what had caused it, and said to his companion, with a laugh, —

"It 's the citizen, dreaming."

The citizen heard the words, his eyes opened anew, and a threatening glance followed the soldier for an instant; then, with a swift movement, he seized the paper on which the order was written, and hid it in his breast.

Marceau held his breath; his right hand seemed glued to his sword hilt; his left hand and his forehead sustained the weight of his whole body as he leaned against the partition.

The object of his attention was then lying on his side; soon he began to move slowly, helping himself along with his elbow and knee, but still in a recumbent position, toward the door of the cabin. The space between the threshold and the lower part of the door enabled him to see the legs of a group of soldiers standing outside; thereupon he began, slowly and patiently, to crawl toward the open window. When he arrived within three feet of it, he felt in his breast for a weapon which was hidden there, gathered his body for a spring, and with a single leap — the leap of a jaguar — sprang out of the cabin. Marceau uttered a cry; he had had no time to foresee or prevent that manœuvre. Another cry answered his; it was a malediction. The Vendean, on landing outside the window, had found himself face to face with General Dumas. He had tried to strike him with his knife; but the general, seizing his wrist, had turned the knife against his breast, so that he had only to push to make the Vendean stab himself.

"I promised you a guide, Marceau; here 's one, and an intelligent one, too, I fancy. I might order you shot, knave," he said to the peasant, "but it suits my purpose better to allow you to live. You overheard our conversation, but you won't report it to them who sent you. — Citizens," — he addressed the soldiers whom the curious scene had attracted, — "do two of you take a hand each of this man, and take your places with him at the head of the column: he will be our guide; if you see that he 's leading you astray, or if he makes a motion to run away, blow his brains out, and toss him over the hedge."

An order or two, issued in a low voice, set in motion the broken line of soldiers encircling the ashes that had been a village. The groups lengthened out, each platoon seemed welded to the next. A black line formed and marched down the long, sunken road that runs from Saint-Crépin to Montfaucon like a wheel in a rut; and when, a few moments later, the moon looked out from between two clouds, and shone for a moment on that line of bayonets gleaming noiselessly, you would have fancied that you were looking upon an immense black serpent with steel scales crawling through the darkness.

II.

A NIGHT march is a melancholy thing for an army. War is a fine thing on a fine day, when the blue sky looks down on the *mêlée*, and crowds of people, standing around the battlefield as on the benches at a circus, applaud the victors; when the quivering tones of the brass instruments make the heart's courageous fibres vibrate, when the smoke from a thousand cannon covers you with its shroud, when friends and enemies are there to see how nobly you meet death: it is sublime. But at night! To have no idea how you will be attacked or how you are to defend yourself; to fall without seeing who strikes you or where the blow comes from; to feel those who are still on their feet stumble over you without knowing who you are, and walk upon you! Ah! then you do not pose as a gladiator; you roll, and twist, and bite the earth, and tear it with your nails: it is horrible!

That is why the army marched in gloom and silence; the soldiers knew that on either side of the road were high hedges, fields filled with furze and broom, and that at the end of the march there was to be a battle, — a night battle.

They marched for about half an hour. From time to time, as I have already said, a moonbeam filtered between two clouds, and revealed the peasant who acted as guide walking at the head of the column, his ear open to the slightest sound, and still watched by the two soldiers beside him. Sometimes they heard a rustling among the leaves at the side of the road. The

head of the column would suddenly halt; several voices would shout, "Qui vive?" There would be no reply, and the peasant would say, with a laugh, —

"It 's a hare leaving his form."

Sometimes the two soldiers imagined that they saw something they could not clearly distinguish moving in front of them; they would say to each other, —

"Look!"

And the Vendean would reply, —

"It 's your shadow: march on!"

Suddenly, at a turn in the road, they saw the figures of two men start up in front of them. They tried to cry out. One of them fell before he could utter a sound; the other staggered a moment, and had only time to cry, —

"Help!"

Twenty musket shots rang out on the instant; by the light of the explosion they could distinguish three men running away: one of them staggered along the bank beside the road, hoping to reach the other side of the hedge. They ran to him, — he was not the guide; they questioned him, but he did not reply; a soldier ran his bayonet through his arm to see if he was dead, — he was.

Thereupon Marceau became the guide. The study he had made of the localities gave him hope that he would not lose his way. In fact, after a quarter of an hour's march they discovered the dark mass of the forest. There it was that, according to the notice the republicans had received, the inhabitants of several villages, the remnants of several armies, some eighteen hundred men all told, were to assemble to hear mass.

The two generals divided their little force into several columns, with orders to surround the forest and march toward the centre by all the paths leading in that direc-

tion; they calculated that half an hour would be sufficient to enable them to reach their respective positions. One platoon halted at the road that entered the forest where they approached it; the others stretched out in both directions to form a circle. For a moment or two their measured tread could be heard; it grew fainter and fainter, then died away altogether, and everything was silent. The half-hour before a battle passes quickly. The soldier hardly has time to see if his musket is well primed, and to say to his neighbor, —

"I have twenty or thirty francs in the corner of my knapsack; if I die, send them to my mother."

The word "Forward!" rang out, and every one jumped as if he were not expecting it.

As they advanced, it seemed to them that the cross-roads which formed the centre of the forest was lighted; as they drew near they could see the flaming torches; soon objects became more distinct, and a spectacle that no one of them had conceived was offered to their gaze.

Upon an altar, roughly made of stones piled together, the curé of Sainte-Marie de Rhé was saying mass; old men stood around the altar, torch in hand, and all about them knelt women and children praying. Between the republicans and that group a wall of men was stationed, and presented the same plan of battle for defence, on a narrower base, as that adopted for the attack. It would have been evident enough that they had been warned, even if the guide who had fled had not been a prominent figure in the front rank; now he was a Vendean soldier in full uniform, wearing on the left breast the red cloth heart which was used as a rallying-sign, and on the hat the white handkerchief which took the place of a plume.

The Vendeans did not wait to be attacked; they had stationed sharp-shooters in the woods, and began the firing. The republicans marched on, with their muskets ready, but without firing a shot, without replying to the constant fire of their enemies, without speaking, except to say, after each discharge, —

"Close up! close up!"

The priest had not finished his mass, and he kept on; his flock seemed unconscious of what was taking place, and remained on their knees. The republican troops continued to advance. When they were within thirty paces of the enemy, the front rank knelt on one knee; three lines of muskets were lowered like grain bent by the wind. The word to fire was given: they saw the light through the Vendean ranks, and some bullets, passing through, struck down women and children at the foot of the altar. For a moment there was a great outcry and confusion in the assemblage. The priest raised the host, all heads were bowed to the earth, and all was silence once more.

The republicans discharged a second volley at ten paces, as calmly as at a review, with as much precision as if they were firing at a target. The Vendeans replied, and after that neither side had time to reload; it was the bayonet's turn, and here all the advantage lay with the republicans, who were regularly armed. The priest continued to say mass.

The Vendeans fell back; whole ranks fell, with no sound save muttered maledictions. The priest saw what was happening; he made a sign, — the torches were extinguished, and the battle was continued in the darkness. Thereafter it was simply a scene of disorder and carnage, in which every one struck without seeing where he struck, savagely, and died without asking

quarter, which is seldom given when the request is made and answered in the same tongue.

But the words, "Mercy! mercy!" were uttered in a heartrending tone at Marceau's knees, as his sword was raised to strike.

It was a young Vendean, a mere child, unarmed, who was trying to escape from the horrible *mêlée*. "Mercy! mercy!" he exclaimed; "in Heaven's name, in the name of your mother!"

The general led him a few yards away from the battle-field, to remove him from the glances of his soldiers; but he was soon compelled to stop: the young man had fainted. Such excessive terror on the part of a soldier astonished the general; he was none the less zealous in his efforts to assist him; he opened his coat to give him air: it was a woman.

There was not an instant to lose; the Convention's orders were precise. Every Vendean taken under arms, or present at a meeting, whatever his or her sex or age, was to perish on the scaffold. He seated the girl at the foot of a tree and hurried back to the field of battle. Among the dead he noticed a young republican officer whose figure seemed to him to be almost the same as the stranger's; he speedily removed his coat and his hat, and returned to the Vendean.

The cool night air soon restored her to consciousness.

"Father! father!" were her first words.

Then she rose and pressed her hands against her forehead as if to collect her thoughts.

"Oh! it is terrible! I was with him, and I deserted him. Father, father! He must be dead!"

"Mademoiselle Blanche, young mistress," said a man whose head suddenly appeared behind the tree, "the

Marquis de Beaulieu lives; he is saved. *Vive le roi* and the good cause!"

The man who said these words disappeared like a ghost, but not so quickly that Marceau had not time to recognize the peasant of Saint-Crépin.

"Tinguy, Tinguy!" cried the girl, putting out her arms to the farmer.

"Silence!" said the general; "a single word will betray you. I could not save you then, and I wish to save you. Put on this hat and coat and wait here."

He returned to the battlefield, gave orders for the troops to fall back upon Cholet, left his colleague in command, and returned to the young Vendean.

He found her ready to go with him. They walked together toward a sort of high-road, where Marceau's servant was waiting with horses, which could not go into the heart of the country where the roads are naught but ravines and bogs. There his embarrassment redoubled. He feared that his young companion would not know how to ride, and had not the strength to walk; but she soon reassured him by the way in which she managed her mount, with less strength, to be sure, but with as much grace and address as the best horseman.[1]

She saw Marceau's surprise and smiled.

"You will be less astonished," said she, "when you know me. You will see by what chain of circumstances

[1] Even if what follows should not explain this skill, which is rare among us in a woman, the custom of the province would justify it. Even the ladies of the *châteaux* ride, literally speaking, like a Longchamps dandy; but they wear under their dresses, which the saddle raises, trousers like those worn by children. The women of the lower classes do not take even that precaution, although the color of their skin led me for a long time to think the contrary. — (*Author's note.*)

manly exercises have become familiar to me; you seem so kind that I will tell you the whole story of my life, which has been so full of trouble, young as I am."

"Yes, yes, but later," said Marceau; "we shall have time enough, for you are my prisoner, and for your own sake I do not propose to restore your liberty. What we have to do now is to get to Cholet as fast as we can. So sit firmly in your saddle, and put your horse to the gallop, my cavalier!"

"Gallop it is!" rejoined the Vendean.

Three quarters of an hour later they arrived at Cholet. The commanding general was at the mayor's office. Marceau went up, leaving his servant and his prisoner at the door. He made a report of his expedition in a few words, and went with his little party to seek quarters at the Hôtel des Sans-Culottes, a name which had replaced on the sign the words, "Au Grand Saint Nicolas."

Marceau took two rooms. He escorted the young woman to one of them, urged her to lie down without undressing and snatch a few moments' rest, which she must sadly need after the horrible night she had passed, and then shut himself into his own room; for now he had the responsibility of another life on his hands, and he must needs think of the means of preserving it.

Blanche, too, had food for thought in plenty: in the first place her father, and secondly this young republican with the sweet face and voice. It all seemed like a dream to her. She walked about her room to make sure that she was really awake, pausing in front of a mirror to convince herself that it was really she. Then she wept as she thought of her desolate position. The idea of death — of death on the scaffold — did not occur to her; Marceau had said, in his gentle voice, —

"I will save you."

And, after all, why should she, born only yesterday, be put to death? Lovely, inoffensive creature that she was, why should men demand her head and her blood? She could hardly believe that she was in any danger. Her father, on the contrary, a Vendean leader, killed others, and might be killed; but she, a poor girl, whose hand had but just quitted the grasp of childhood! Ah! far from being disturbed by evil omens, life seemed joyous and fair to her, the future boundless; the war would come to an end, the empty château would be filled with guests once more. Some day a young man, worn by fatigue, would seek hospitality there; he would be twenty-four or twenty-five years old, have a sweet voice, fair hair, and a general's uniform, and he would remain there a long while.— Dream on, dream on, poor Blanche!

There is a period of youth when misfortune seems so incongruous with life that it seems that it can never gain a footing there; however melancholy a thought may be, it ends with a smile. It is because we see life from only one side of the horizon; the past has not yet had time to make us doubt the future.

Marceau also was dreaming; but he already knew something of life. He was familiar with the political antipathies of the moment; he knew the exigencies of a revolution; he was trying to devise a means of saving Blanche, who was sleeping. A single expedient suggested itself to him: that was to escort her himself to Nantes, where his family lived. He had not seen his mother or sister in three years, and being within a few leagues of the town, it seemed quite natural that he should apply to the commanding general for leave of absence. He resolved to act upon that idea. The day

was just breaking; he repaired to General Westermann's quarters, and his request was granted without hesitation. He asked that the necessary papers be given him at once, thinking that Blanche could not start too soon; it was essential that the furlough should bear a second signature, that of the representative of the people, — Delmar. He had arrived only a half-hour before with despatches; he was taking a few moments' sleep in the adjoining room, and the general promised to send Marceau the document as soon as he awoke.

On entering the inn, he met General Dumas, for whom he was looking. The two friends had no secrets from each other; the elder was soon made acquainted with the whole adventure. While breakfast was being prepared, Marceau went up to his prisoner's room, learning that she had already asked for him; he announced a visit from his colleague, who was not slow to present himself. His first words reassured Blanche, and, after a moment's conversation, she felt nothing more than the inevitable embarrassment of a young girl with two men whom she hardly knows.

They were about to take their seats at the table, when the door opened. Delmar, the representative of the people, appeared on the threshold.

We had no time, at the beginning of the narrative, to say a word concerning this new personage.

He was one of those men whom Robespierre used like an arm at the end of his own to enable him to reach into the provinces; who believed that they understood his system of regeneration because he said to them, "We must regenerate;" and in whose hands the guillotine was more active than intelligent.

The sinister apparition made Blanche tremble, even before she knew who he was.

"Aha!" said he to Marceau, "so you want to leave us already, citizen-general? But you behaved so well last night that I can refuse you nothing. I am a little inclined to find fault with you, however, for having allowed the Marquis de Beaulieu to escape; I had promised the Convention to send them his head."

Blanche was standing, pale and cold as a statue of Terror. Marceau unconcernedly stood in front of her.

"But a thing postponed is not abandoned," continued Delmar. "The republican greyhounds have a good nose and good teeth, and we are on his trail. Here is your furlough," he added. "It is all right, and you can start when you choose. But I have come to ask you to invite me to breakfast first; I could not bear to part with such a gallant fellow as you are without drinking to the health of the Republic and the extermination of the brigands."

In the position then occupied by the two generals this mark of esteem was anything but agreeable to them. Blanche had taken her seat and recovered her courage in some degree. They took their places, and the young girl, in order not to sit opposite Delmar, was obliged to sit beside him. She sat far enough away from him not to touch him, and gradually became more at ease as she noticed that the representative of the people paid more attention to the meal than to those who partook of it with him. From time to time, however, a sanguinary word or two fell from his lips, and sent a shudder through the girl's veins. But, after all, there seemed to be no real danger for her; the generals hoped that he would leave them without addressing her a word directly. The desire to start afforded Marceau a pretext for hurrying through the meal. It was drawing to a close, and they were all beginning to breathe more at ease, when

a discharge of musketry was heard on the public square in front of the inn; the generals jumped for their weapons, which they had laid aside. Delmar stopped them.

"Good, my brave fellows!" he said, laughing, and balancing himself on the legs of his chair, — "good! I like to see that you are on your guard; but come back to the table, — there 's nothing for you to do out there."

"What is the noise?" Marceau asked.

"Nothing," said Delmar; "last night's prisoners being shot."

Blanche uttered a cry of horror.

"Oh, the wretches!" she cried.

Delmar put down his glass, which he was about to put to his lips, and slowly turned toward her.

"Ah! this is a fine state of things," he said; "if soldiers tremble like women, we must make the women soldiers. To be sure, you 're very young," he added, taking both her hands and looking her in the face; "but you will get used to it."

"Oh, never! never!" cried Blanche, without reflecting how dangerous it was for her to manifest her feelings before such a witness. "I shall never get used to such horrors."

"My child," rejoined Delmar, releasing her hands, "do you think that a nation can be regenerated without some blood-letting, that factions can be put down without erecting scaffolds? Did you ever see a revolution pass the level of equality over a people without taking off some heads? Woe to the great at such times, for the staff of Tarquin has marked them out!"

He paused for a moment, then continued, —

"After all, what is death? A dreamless sleep, without an awakening. What is blood? A red liquor

almost like that contained in this bottle, which produces no effect on our minds except because of the idea we attach to it. Sombreuil drank it. Well, have you nothing to say? Come, have n't you any philanthropic argument at your tongue's end? A Girondin in your place would n't lack an abundance of them."

Blanche was compelled, therefore, to continue the conversation.

"Oh," she said, trembling, "are you quite sure that God has given you the right to strike thus?"

"Does not God himself strike?"

"Yes, but He looks beyond life, while man, when he kills, knows neither what he gives nor what he takes away."

"Very good. The soul is immortal or it is not; if the body is only dust, is it a crime to restore to dust a little sooner what God borrowed of it? If a soul inhabits it, and that soul is immortal, I cannot kill it; the body is only a garment which I remove from it, or, rather, a prison from which I set it free. Now, listen to my advice, for I propose to give you some advice: keep your philosophical reflections and your schoolboy arguments to defend your own life, if ever you fall into Charette's hands or Bernard de Marigny's, for they would show you no more mercy than I have shown their men. As for myself, you might possibly have reason to repent repeating them in my presence: remember."

He went out.

There was a moment's silence. Marceau laid aside his pistols, which he had cocked during this conversation.

"By my soul!" he said, pointing after him with his finger, "never was man so near death without suspecting it as you were just now! — Do you know, Blanche,

that if a word or a gesture had escaped him, indicating that he recognized you, I would have blown out his brains?"

She was not listening. A single thought had possession of her mind: that that man was under instructions to pursue the remnant of the army commanded by the Marquis de Beaulieu.

"O my God!" she said, hiding her face in her hands. "O my God! when I think that my father may fall into that tiger's hands; that, if he had been taken prisoner last night, it is possible that he might now be — It is execrable, it is atrocious! is there no longer any pity in the world? — Oh, forgive me, forgive me!" she said to Marceau. "Who has more reason than I to know the contrary? My God! my God!"

At that moment the servant entered, and announced that the horses were ready.

"Let us go, in Heaven's name! there is blood in the air we breathe here."

"Let us go," echoed Marceau.

And all three went down the stairs together.

III.

Marceau found at the door a detachment of thirty horse, whom the commanding general had ordered under arms to escort him to Nantes. Dumas accompanied them for some distance; but about a league from Cholet his friend insisted that he should return; if he should go farther it would be dangerous for him to return alone. So he took leave of them and galloped back, soon passing out of sight at a turn in the road.

Then, too, Marceau wished to be left alone with the young Vendean. She had the story of her life to tell him, and it seemed to him that the story must be a deeply interesting one. He therefore rode up beside Blanche.

"Well," he said, "now that we are left to ourselves, and have a long ride before us, let us talk. Let us talk of you. I know who you are, but that is all. How came you to be at that meeting? How did you acquire the habit of wearing man's clothes? Speak! we soldiers are accustomed to hear only sharp, stern words. Talk to me a long while of yourself, of your childhood, I beg you."

Marceau, without knowing why, could not accustom himself to use the republican form of speech of the time in addressing Blanche.

Thereupon Blanche told him of her life: how her mother had died young, and left her, a mere child, to the care of the Marquis de Beaulieu; how her education, guided by a man, had made her familiar with

exercises which, when the insurrection broke out in La Vendée, had proved so useful to her, and had enabled her to accompany her father. She described all the events of the war, from the *émeute* at Saint-Florent down to the combat in which Marceau had saved her life. She talked a long while, as he had asked her, for she saw that it gave him pleasure to listen. Just as she finished her narrative, Nantes appeared on the horizon, its lights trembling in the haze. The little party crossed the Loire, and a few moments later Marceau was in his mother's arms.

After the first greetings he presented to his family his young travelling companion; a few words sufficed to arouse the lively interest of his mother and sisters. Blanche had no sooner expressed a wish to resume the garments of her sex than the two girls led her away, and disputed with each other the pleasure of acting as her lady's maid.

This conduct, simple as it may appear at first sight, acquired a great value by reason of the existing circumstances. Nantes was writhing under the proconsulate of Carrier.

It was a strange spectacle for the mind as well as for the eyes, — the spectacle of a whole city bleeding from the bites of a single man. We wonder what can be the source of the power that one will exerts over eighty thousand individuals whom it dominates, and how it is that, when a single man says: "I wish it!" all the others do not rise and say: "Very good! but we do not wish it!" The fact is that servility becomes a fixed habit in the mind of the masses, and that only individuals sometimes have a burning desire to be free. As Shakespeare says, the people know no other way of rewarding Cæsar's assassin than by making him Cæsar.

That is why there are tyrants of liberty as there are tyrants of monarchy.

And so blood was flowing in the streets of Nantes, and Carrier, who was to Robespierre what the hyena is to the tiger and the jackal to the lion, gorged himself with the purest of that blood, pending the time when he should give it back, mingled with his own.

There were new methods of massacre. The guillotine became notched and blunted so quickly! He conceived the idea of the *noyades*, whose name has become inseparable from his; boats were built for the purpose in the harbor, — people knew for what purpose and went to look at them on the ways. It was a novel and interesting thing to see the airholes twenty feet long, which opened so as to drop into the sea the wretched creatures set apart for that form of punishment; and, on the fatal day, when they were tried, there were almost as many people on the bank as when a vessel is launched with a wreath about its mainmast, and flags on every yard.

Oh! woe thrice over to the men who, like Carrier, have exerted their imaginations in inventing variations upon death; for every method of destroying man comes easily to man! Woe to those who, acting upon no theory, have committed useless murders! They are the ones who cause our mothers to tremble at the words *revolution* and *republic*, inseparable in their minds from *massacre* and *destruction;* and our mothers make us men, and who among us, as he went forth from his mother's hands at fifteen, did not shudder, too, at the words *revolution* and *republic?* which of us has not had to make over his whole political education before he dared look coolly upon that date which he had long looked upon as fatal, — 93? which of us has not re-

quired to put forth all his strength as a man of twenty-five to look in the face the three colossi of the Revolution, — Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre? But at last we have become accustomed to the sight of them; we have studied the ground on which they walked, the principles on which they acted, and involuntarily we have recalled these awful words of another time: *Each of them fell because he sought to put a drag on the executioner's tumbril, which still had work to do.* They did not outstrip the Revolution; the Revolution outstripped them.

Let us not complain, however; rehabilitation is quickly accomplished in these days, for now the people write the history of the people. It was not so in the time of Messieurs the historiographers of the crown; did I not hear it said when I was a child, that Louis XI. was a bad king, and Louis XIV. a great prince?

Let us return to Marceau and a family whom his name protected even against Carrier. The young general's reputation for republicanism was so pure that suspicion had not dared attack his mother and sisters. That is why one of them, a girl of sixteen, as if she were entirely ignorant of what was taking place about her, loved and was loved, and Marceau's mother, timid as a mother, seeing in a husband an additional protector, hurried on as much as she could a marriage which was on the point of being celebrated when Marceau and the young Vendean arrived at Nantes. The general's return at such a moment was a twofold joy.

Blanche was turned over to the two girls, who became her friends as they kissed her; for there is an age when every girl imagines that she has found a friend forever in the friend she has known but an hour. They left the room together; a matter almost as important as the

marriage itself filled their minds: the furnishing one of their number with clothes, for Blanche did not choose to continue to wear her masculine garments.

Soon they brought her back, arrayed in the clothes of both; she had had to put on a dress belonging to one, and the other's shawl. Foolish girls! to be sure, their combined ages did not equal that of Marceau's mother, who was still beautiful.

When Blanche returned, the young general stepped toward her, and halted in amazement. In the costume she had worn before, he had hardly noticed her celestial beauty and her charms, which she had resumed with her woman's garb. She had done her utmost, it is true, to appear pretty: for a moment, before her mirror, she had forgotten war, Vendée, and carnage. The most artless soul has a coquetry of her own when she begins to love and seeks to please the person she loves.

Marceau tried to speak, but could not utter a word. Blanche smiled, and held out her hand, overjoyed, for she saw that she appeared to him as beautiful as she wished to appear.

That evening the young fiancé of Marceau's sister came to the house, and as all love is selfish, from self-love to maternal love, there was one house in the city of Nantes where all was happiness and joy, when round about it all was tears and sorrow.

Ah! how Blanche and Marceau abandoned themselves to the delight of their new life! how far behind them the other life seemed! It was almost a dream. But from time to time Blanche's heart grew heavy and tears gushed from her eyes; it was when the thought of her father came suddenly to her mind. Marceau consoled her; then, to divert her thoughts, told her of his first campaigns; how the schoolboy had become a soldier at

fifteen, an officer at seventeen, colonel at nineteen, general at twenty-one. Blanche made him repeat the story often; for in all that he said there was no word of another love.

And yet Marceau had loved, — loved with all the strength of his heart, at least so he thought. Then he had been deceived, betrayed; contempt had with great difficulty found a resting-place in a heart so young that it contained nothing but passions. The blood that boiled in his veins had slowly cooled, — a melancholy coldness had taken the place of exaltation; in fact, Marceau, before he knew Blanche, was nothing more than a sick man, deprived, by the sudden cessation of fever, of the strength and energy which he owed to its presence alone.

And now all the dreams of happiness, all the elements of a new life, all the joyous impulses of youth, which Marceau thought had vanished forever so far as he was concerned, appeared again, still undefined in the distance, but where he might hope to reach them some day. He himself was astonished to find that a smile came sometimes to his lips without apparent cause; he breathed with the full force of his lungs, and no longer felt the tedium of living, which, only the day before, sapped his strength and made him long for speedy death as the only barrier that grief cannot pass.

Blanche, for her part, being drawn toward Marceau at first by a natural feeling of gratitude, attributed to that feeling the varying emotions that agitated her. Was it not a simple thing that she should desire the constant presence of the man who had saved her life? The words that fell from her preserver's lips could hardly be indifferent to her? Could his face, stamped with such profound melancholy, fail to awaken her compas-

sion? And when she saw him sigh as he gazed at her, was she not always ready to say to him: "What can I do for you, my friend, who have done so much for me?"

Under the sway of these varying sentiments, which gained fresh strength every day, Blanche and Marceau passed the first part of their stay at Nantes; at last the time for the marriage of the young general's sister arrived.

From among the jewels he had ordered for her, Marceau selected a beautiful and valuable set, which he offered to Blanche. She gazed at it, at first, with girlish coquetry, but soon she closed the case.

"Are jewels in harmony with my situation?" she said sadly. "Jewels for me! while my father is flying, perhaps, from farm to farm, begging for a crust of bread to keep him alive, and for leave to seek shelter in a barn; while I, myself proscribed — No; let my simple dress screen me from observation; remember that I may be recognized."

Marceau urged her in vain; she would consent to accept nothing but an artificial red rose, which she saw among the ornaments.

The churches were closed, so that the marriage ceremony was performed at the Hôtel de Ville. It was short and melancholy; the young girls regretted the choir decorated with candles and flowers, the canopy held over the heads of the young couple, beneath which the laughter of those who hold it is mingled with the benediction of the priest, who says: "Go hence, my children, and be happy!"

At the door of the Hôtel de Ville a deputation of watermen awaited the bride and groom. Marceau's rank was responsible for that mark of respect to his

sister; one of the men, whose face seemed familiar to the general, held two bouquets: he gave one to the bride, then walked up to Blanche, who gazed fixedly at him, and presented her with the other.

"Tinguy, where is my father?" she asked, turning pale.

"At Saint-Florent," replied the waterman. "Take this bouquet; there 's a letter among the flowers. *Vive le roi* and the good cause, Mademoiselle Blanche!"

Blanche tried to stop him, to speak to him, to question him; he had disappeared. Marceau recognized the guide, and, in spite of himself, admired the peasant's devotion, adroitness and audacity.

Blanche read the letter with an anxious heart. The Vendeans were meeting with defeat after defeat; a whole population was leaving the country, recoiling before fire and famine. The rest of the letter was devoted to acknowledgments to Marceau. The marquis had learned everything through Tinguy's watchfulness. Blanche was depressed; the letter cast her back into the midst of the horrors of war; she leaned on Marceau's arm more heavily than usual, she spoke to him more intimately and in a softer voice. Marceau would have liked her to be even more depressed; for the deeper the melancholy, the more completely reserve is cast aside; and, as I have already said, there is much selfishness in love.

During the ceremony, a stranger, who had, he said, intelligence of the utmost importance to communicate to Marceau, was ushered into the salon. Marceau, leaning toward Blanche, who had his arm, did not notice him when he entered; but suddenly he felt her arm tremble, and raised his head: they were face to face with Delmar.

The representative of the people approached slowly, with his eyes fixed on Blanche and a smile playing about his lips; Marceau, his brow bathed in sweat, watched him come forward as Don Juan watches the statue of the Commander.

"Have you a brother, citizeness?"

Blanche stammered something, and was on the point of throwing herself into Marceau's arms. Delmar continued: —

"If my memory and your resemblance to him do not lead me astray, we breakfasted together at Cholet. How does it happen that I have not seen him in the ranks of the republican army since that time?"

Blanche felt that her strength was deserting her. Delmar's piercing eye watched the progress of her confusion, and she was about to quail beneath it, when it turned from her and fastened upon Marceau.

Then it was Delmar's turn to tremble. The young general had his hand on the hilt of his sword, which he grasped convulsively. The face of the representative of the people soon resumed its habitual expression. He seemed to have entirely forgotten what he had come to say, and, taking Marceau by the arm, he led him into a window recess, talked with him for some minutes concerning the situation of affairs in La Vendée, and informed him that he had come to Nantes to agree with Carrier as to the new and stricter measures to be adopted with regard to the insurgents. He told him that General Dumas had been recalled to Paris; and, taking leave of him before long, he passed with a bow and a smile the chair upon which Blanche had fallen when she released Marceau's arm, and on which she had remained, pale and cold.

Two hours later Marceau received orders to start

instantly to rejoin the army of the West and resume command of his brigade.

This sudden and unexpected order astonished him; he fancied that he could detect some connection between it and the scene that had taken place just before. His furlough did not expire for a fortnight. He hurried to Delmar's lodgings to obtain some explanation from him; Delmar had left Nantes immediately after his interview with Carrier.

It was necessary to obey; to hesitate was to court destruction. At that period the generals were subject to the authority of the representatives of the people sent by the Convention, and, if some reverses were caused by their bungling, more than one victory was due to the alternative constantly presented to the leaders, of winning battles or losing their heads on the scaffold.

Marceau was with Blanche when he received the order. Dazed by a blow so entirely unexpected, he had not the courage to inform her of his departure, which would leave her alone and defenceless in the midst of a city whose streets were watered every day by the blood of her compatriots. She noticed his embarrassment, and, as her anxiety conquered her bashfulness, she drew near him with the unquiet glance of a woman who knows that she is beloved and has the right to ask questions. Marceau handed her the order he had received. Blanche had no sooner cast her eyes upon it than she realized the peril to which her protector would be exposed by failure to obey; her heart sank within her, and yet she summoned courage to urge him to go without delay. Women have more of that sort of courage than men, because, in their case, it is connected with modesty.

Marceau gazed sadly at her.

"And do you bid me go, Blanche, — you? Indeed," he said, rising, and as if speaking to himself, "what reason have I to expect anything else? Madman that I was! When I have thought of going away, it has occurred to me, sometimes, that it might cost her some regret and a few tears."

He strode up and down the room.

"Madman! regret! tears! As if I were not perfectly indifferent to her!"

As he turned he found himself face to face with Blanche. Two tears were rolling down the girl's cheeks; she did not speak, but her breast rose and fell with her spasmodic sobs. Marceau felt the tears in his eyes, too.

"Oh! forgive me," he said; "forgive me, Blanche, but I am very unhappy, and unhappiness makes me suspicious. Living thus, beside you, my life seemed to be mingled with yours; how separate your hours from my hours, my days from your days? I had forgotten everything; I believed that this would last forever. Oh! misery! misery! I have been dreaming, and now I am awake. Blanche," he added, more calmly, but in a more melancholy tone, "the war we are engaged in is a cruel and murderous one; it is possible that we may not meet again."

He took Blanche's hand; she was sobbing.

"Promise me that if I fall far away from you — I have always had a presentiment, Blanche, that my life would be a short one — promise me that you will think of me sometimes; that my name will sometimes come to your lips, even if it be only in a dream; and I, Blanche, promise you that, if there is time between life and death for me to pronounce a name, a single one, it shall be yours."

Blanche was choked by her tears; but there were in her eyes a thousand promises more tender than those Marceau demanded. With one hand she pressed Marceau's, who was at her feet, and with the other pointed to the red rose, which she wore in her hair.

"Forever! forever!" she faltered.

And she fell in a swoon.

Marceau's cries summoned his mother and sisters. He thought that Blanche was dead; he was writhing on the floor at her feet. In love everything is exaggerated, — hopes and fears. The soldier was only a child.

Blanche opened her eyes, and blushed when she saw Marceau at her feet and his family around him.

"He is going away," she said; "perhaps to fight against my father. Oh! spare my father if he should fall into your hands; remember that his death would kill me. What more can you ask?" she added, lowering her eyes. "I did not think of my father until after I thought of you."

Thereupon, summoning all her courage, she begged Marceau to go. He himself realized the necessity of doing so, and no longer resisted her entreaties and his mother's. The necessary orders were given, and, an hour later, he had said farewell to Blanche and his family.

Marceau left Nantes by the same road he and Blanche had ridden over together; he allowed his horse to take his own gait, for at every step he was reminded of some passage in the young Vendean's narrative. He reviewed, so to speak, the story she had told him; and the danger to which she was exposed, of which he had not thought while he was with her, seemed to him much greater now that he had left her. Every word Delmar had spoken rang in his ears; every moment he was on the point of

stopping his horse and returning to Nantes; and it required all his good sense to prevent his yielding to his craving to see her again.

If Marceau had been able to think of aught beside the subject that filled his whole mind, he would have noticed a horseman, in the distance, coming toward him, who, after drawing rein a moment to make sure that he was not mistaken, urged his horse to a gallop to join him; and he would have recognized General Dumas as promptly as he himself was recognized by him.

The friends leaped from their horses and threw themselves into each other's arms.

At the same instant a man, with perspiration dripping from his hair, his face and clothes scratched and torn, leaped over a hedge, rolled, rather than ran, down the bank, and fell, exhausted, almost voiceless, at the feet of the two friends, uttering the one word: —

"Arrested!"

It was Tinguy.

"Arrested? who? Blanche?" cried Marceau.

The peasant made an affirmative gesture; the poor fellow could not speak. He had made five leagues, running across fields and hedges, through furze and broom; he might perhaps have run one league, two leagues more, to overtake Marceau; but, having overtaken him, he collapsed.

Marceau gazed at him with open mouth and staring eyes.

"Arrested! Blanche arrested!" he kept repeating, while his friend put his flask of wine to the peasant's clinched teeth. "Blanche arrested! That was why they sent me away. Alexandre," he cried, taking his friend's hand, and forcing him to rise, — "Alexandre, I

am going back to Nantes; you must go with me, for my life, my future, my happiness, all are there."

His teeth chattered violently; his whole body was shaken by a convulsive trembling.

"Let the man tremble who has dared to lay his hand on Blanche! Do you know that I love her with all the strength of my soul; that life is not possible for me without her, that I must save her or die? Oh! fool, madman that I was to leave her! — Blanche arrested! where has she been taken?"

Tinguy, to whom that question was put, was beginning to come to himself. The veins in his forehead swelled as if they were about to burst; his eyes were injected with blood; and his chest was so oppressed, his breathing so labored, that he could hardly reply when the question was put to him a second time.

"To the Bouffays prison."

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than the two friends started back toward Nantes at a gallop.

IV.

THERE was not a moment to lose; therefore the friends rode straight to the house occupied by Carrier on Place du Cours. When they arrived, Marceau leaped from his horse, mechanically took his pistols, which were in the holsters, concealed them beneath his coat, and rushed to the apartments of the man who held Blanche's destiny in his hands. His friend followed him more calmly, although fully prepared to defend him if he needed his assistance, and to risk his life as recklessly as upon the battlefield. But the deputy of the Mountain knew too well how universally abhorred he was not to be suspicious, and neither entreaties nor threats could procure the two generals an interview.

Marceau returned to the street more tranquilly than his friend expected. In the last moment or two he seemed to have adopted a new plan, which he matured in haste, and there was no further doubt as to his purpose when he begged General Dumas to go at once to the post house and wait for him at the Bouffays gate with a carriage and post horses.

Marceau's name and rank opened the prison doors to him; he ordered the jailer to show him to the cell in which Blanche was confined. The jailer hesitated a moment. Marceau repeated the command in a more imperative tone, and the man obeyed, motioning to him to follow.

"She is not alone," said his guide, opening the low arched door of a dungeon so dark that it made Marceau

shudder; "but she 'll soon be rid of her companion, for he 's to be guillotined to-day."

With those words he closed the door on Marceau, urging him to abridge as much as possible an interview which might compromise him.

Still dazzled by the sudden transition from light to darkness, Marceau put out his arms like a man walking in his sleep, trying to pronounce the word "Blanche," which his mouth refused to form, and unable to pierce with his eyes the shadows that surrounded him. He heard a stifled cry. The girl threw herself into his arms; she had recognized him at once, for her eyes were already accustomed to the darkness.

She threw herself into his arms, for there was a moment when terror caused her to forget her age and sex; she thought of nothing but the question of life or death. She clung to him as a shipwrecked sailor clings to a rock, with inarticulate sobs and a convulsive pressure of her arms.

"Ah! ah! you have not abandoned me!" she cried at last. "They arrested me, dragged me here; I saw Tinguy in the crowd that followed me; I cried: 'Marceau! Marceau!' and he disappeared. Oh! I was far from hoping to see you again — even here. But you have come — you have come — you won't leave me. You will take me away; you won't leave me here!"

"I would willingly, at the price of all my blood, take you away instantly; but — "

"Oh, pray look about you; feel of these dripping walls, this filthy straw! You are a general, can you not — "

"This is what I can do, Blanche: knock at yonder door, blow out the brains of the turnkey who opens it, take you out into the courtyard, let you breathe the

fresh air and see the sky once more, and die in your defence; but when I am dead, Blanche, they will bring you back to this dungeon, and there will not be a single man left on earth who can save you."

"But can you save me?"

"Perhaps."

"Soon?"

"In two days, Blanche; I ask you for two days. But you must first answer a question on which your life and mine depend. Answer as you would answer God. Blanche, do you love me?"

"Is this the time and place when such a question should be asked, or when one can answer it? Do you think that these walls are used to hearing declarations of love?"

"Yes, this is the proper time; for we are between life and the grave, between existence and eternity. Blanche, answer me quickly. Every moment robs us of a day, every hour of a year. Do you love me, Blanche?"

"Oh! yes, yes —"

The words escaped from the young girl's heart, and, forgetting that no one could see her blushes, she hid her face on Marceau's arm.

"Very well, Blanche, you must accept me on the spot as your husband."

The girl quivered from head to foot.

"What can be your purpose?"

"My purpose is to snatch you from the jaws of death; we will see if they dare send the wife of a republican general to the scaffold."

Blanche understood his whole thought; she shuddered at the danger to which he would expose himself to save her. Her love gathered new strength; but, summoning all her courage, she said firmly, —

"It is impossible."

"Impossible?" echoed Marceau, "impossible? Why, this is madness! What obstacle can there be between us and happiness, since you have just confessed that you love me? Do you think this is all child's play? Listen to me; listen, in God's name: this means death to you! Do you hear? death on the scaffold, the headsman, the tumbril, the knife!"

"Oh! pity, pity! it is terrible! But think of yourself. When I am once your wife, if that title does not save me, it destroys you with me!"

"So that is your reason for rejecting the only means of safety that is left open to you! Ah! well, listen to me, Blanche, for I have a confession to make to you. When I first saw you, I loved you; my love has become a passion; I live upon it as a part of my life. My life is yours; my fate will be the same as yours; happiness or the scaffold, I will share everything with you; I will not leave you; no human power can part us; or, if I do leave you, I have only to shout *Vive le roi!* Those words will throw your dungeon open to me again, and we will never leave it except together. Oh! well, let it be so: a night in the same dungeon, a ride in the same tumbril, death on the same scaffold, that will be something."

"Oh! no, no! go! leave me, in Heaven's name, leave me!"

"You bid me go! Beware what you say and what you mean; for, if I go from here without having you for my own, without your giving me the right to defend you, I will go to your father — your father, whom you have forgotten, who is weeping for you — and I will say to him: 'Old man, your daughter might have been saved, but she did not choose; she preferred that your

last days should be passed in mourning, and that her blood should be spattered on your gray hairs. Weep, old man, weep, — not because your daughter is dead, but because she did not love you enough to live.' "

Marceau pushed Blanche away; she fell on her knees a few steps from him, and he walked back and forth, with clinched teeth, his arms folded across his breast, and the laughter of a madman, or one of the damned. He heard Blanche's sobs, tears gushed from his eyes, his arms fell nervelessly at his sides, and he grovelled at her feet.

" Oh! in pity's name, by all that you hold most sacred in this world, by your mother's grave, Blanche, Blanche, consent to become my wife. You must; it is your duty."

" Yes, it is your duty, young maiden," said a strange voice, which made them both start and rise from the floor; " it is your duty, for it is the only way of preserving a life that is hardly beginning; religion commands you to do it, and I am ready to bless your union."

Marceau turned in amazement, and recognized the curé of Sainte-Marie-de-Rhé, who was present at the assemblage he had attacked on the night Blanche became his prisoner.

" O father! " he cried, seizing his hand, and pulling him toward Blanche, " obtain her consent to live."

" Blanche de Beaulieu," said the priest, in a solemn tone, " in the name of your father, whom my years and the friendship between us entitle me to represent, I adjure you to yield to the entreaties of this young man, for your father himself, if he were here, would do as I do."

Blanche seemed to be torn by a thousand conflicting

sentiments; but at last she threw herself into Marceau's arms.

"O my love," she said, "I have not the strength to resist you longer. I love you, Marceau! I love you, and I am your wife."

Their lips met; Marceau's joy was beyond bounds; he seemed to have forgotten everything. The priest's voice soon roused him from his trance.

"Make haste, my children," he said; "for my moments here on earth are numbered; and if you delay I can only give you my blessing from on high."

The lovers shuddered. That voice called them back to earth! Blanche looked about her with fearful eyes.

"O my love," she said, "what a moment to unite our destinies! what a temple for a marriage! Do you think that a union consecrated beneath these gloomy, depressing arches can be a happy and lasting one?"

Marceau started; for he himself was assailed by superstitious terror. He led Blanche toward a part of the dungeon where the light, creeping between the crossed bars of a narrow air-hole, made the darkness less dense; there they both fell on their knees, awaiting the priest's blessing.

He put forth his hand, and pronounced the sacred words. At the same moment there was the clashing of weapons and the measured tread of soldiers in the corridor; Blanche, in deadly terror, threw herself into Marceau's arms.

"Can it be that they have come for me already?" she cried. "O my love, my love, how horrible death would be at this moment!"

The young general had jumped in front of the door, a pistol in either hand. The soldiers fell back in amazement.

"Be not alarmed," said the priest, coming forward. "I am the one for whom they have come; I am the one who is to die."

The soldiers surrounded him.

"My children," he exclaimed, in a firm voice, addressing the newly-made husband and wife, — "to your knees, my children; with one foot in the grave I give you my last blessing, and a dying man's blessing is sacred."

The soldiers stood in awed silence; the priest took from his breast a crucifix, which he had succeeded in concealing from all eyes; he stretched it out toward them; being prepared for death himself, he prayed for them. There was a moment of solemn silence, during which everybody believed in God.

"Forward!" said the priest.

The soldiers surrounded him; the door closed, and the party disappeared like a nocturnal vision.

Blanche threw herself into Marceau's arms.

"Oh! if you leave me, and they come for me in that way, if I have not you to help me pass through that door, oh! Marceau! think of it, — the scaffold! I on the scaffold, far from you, weeping and calling you, and having no reply! Oh! do not go away, do not go away! I will throw myself at their feet, I will tell them I am not guilty, and if they will leave me in prison with you all my life I will bless them. But if you leave me — Oh! do not leave me!"

"Blanche, I am sure of saving you; I will answer for your life. In less than two days I will be here with your pardon, and then it will not be a lifetime in a dungeon, but a lifetime of fresh air and happiness, of liberty and love!"

The door opened, and the jailer appeared. Blanche

held Marceau more tightly in her arms; she would not let him go, and yet every moment was precious. He gently unclasped her hands, whose grasp detained him, and promised her that he would return before the close of the second day.

"Love me always," he said, rushing from the cell.

"Always!" said Blanche, staggering back and pointing to the red rose he had given her, which she wore in her hair; and the door closed upon her like the door of hell.

V.

Marceau found General Dumas waiting in the jailer's house; he called for pen and ink and paper.

"What are you going to do?" his friend asked, alarmed by his excitement.

"Write to Carrier, ask him for two days' respite, and tell him that he will answer to me for Blanche's life with his own."

"Madman!" rejoined his friend, snatching away the letter he had begun. "You threaten, and you are in his power; have you not disobeyed the order you received to rejoin the army? Do you think that, when he is already afraid of you, his fears would pause even to find a plausible pretext? Within an hour you would be arrested; and then, what could you do, either for her or for yourself. Take my advice, and by your silence give him a chance to forget, for nothing but his forgetting can save her."

Marceau's head had fallen between his hands; he seemed to be reflecting deeply.

"You are right," he suddenly cried, springing to his feet. And he drew his friend into the street.

A few people were assembled about a post-chaise.

"If it should be foggy to-night," said a voice, "I don't know what should prevent a score of good fellows from coming into the town and carrying off the prisoners. It 's shameful how poorly Nantes is guarded."

Marceau started, turned, recognized Tinguy, exchanged a meaning glance with him, and leaped into the vehicle.

"To Paris!" he said to the postilion, giving him money.

The horses set off with the swiftness of lightning. Everywhere there was the same diligence; everywhere, by the lavish use of money, Marceau obtained a promise that horses should be ready for him on the following day, and that no obstacle should delay his return.

During the journey he learned that General Dumas had handed in his resignation, asking as a favor to be employed as a private in another army; he had, consequently, been placed at the disposal of the Committee of Public Safety, and was on his way to Nantes when Marceau met him on the Clisson road.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the carriage containing the two generals entered Paris.

Marceau and his friend parted on Place du Palais-Égalité.

Marceau walked down Rue Saint-Honoré toward Saint-Roch, stopped at number 366, and asked for Citizen Robespierre.

"He is at the Théâtre de la Nation," replied a girl of sixteen or eighteen; "but if you will come again in two hours he will have returned."

"Robespierre at the Théâtre de la Nation! Are n't you mistaken?"

"No, citizen."

"Very well, I will look for him there, and if I don't find him I will return and wait for him here. This is my name: Citizen General Marceau."

The Théâtre-Français had separated into two troupes: Talma, accompanied by the patriot actors, had emigrated to the Odéon. It was to that theatre, therefore, that Marceau found his way, amazed to have to seek the austere member of the Committee of Public Safety at a place of amusement.

They were playing "The Death of Cæsar." He entered the balcony; a young man offered him a seat beside him in the front row. Marceau accepted it, hoping to see from there the man he sought.

The play had not begun; the audience seemed to be in a strange state of effervescence; laughter and signals were freely exchanged, and started, as from a sort of headquarters, from a group seated in the orchestra; that group dominated the theatre, and was itself dominated by a single man: that man was Danton.

Beside him, speaking when he was silent, holding their peace when he spoke, were Camille-Desmoulins, his fanatical worshipper, Philippaux, Hérault de Séchelles, and Lacroix, his apostles.

It was the first time that Marceau had found himself in the presence of that Mirabeau of the people. He would have recognized him by his loud voice, his imperious gestures, his lordly brow, even if his name had not been pronounced several times by his friends.

We ask indulgence while we say a few words as to the state of the different factions into which the Convention was divided. They are essential to a proper understanding of the scene which follows.

The Commune and Mountain had joined forces to bring about the revolution of the 31st of May. The Girondins, after having tried in vain to effect a federation of the provinces, had fallen, almost undefended, in the midst of those who had chosen them and who simply did not dare to shelter them in the days of their proscription. Before the 31st of May, the power was nowhere; after the 31st of May they felt the necessity of joining forces in order to make prompt action possible. The Assembly possessed the most extensive power: a faction had taken possession of the Assembly; a few

men swayed that faction; naturally, the power was in the hands of those men. The Committee of Public Safety, up to the 31st of May, had been made up of neutral members of the Convention; the time for its renewal arrived, and the extreme *Montagnards* made places for themselves upon it. Barrère remained as a representative of the former committee, but Robespierre was chosen a member; Saint-Just, Collot d'Herbois, and Billaud-Varennes, supported by him, put down their colleagues, Hérault de Séchelles and Robert Lindet; Saint-Just undertook the duty of surveillance, Couthon that of softening down propositions that were too violent in tone; Billaud-Varennes and Collot d'Herbois managed the proconsulates of the departments; Carnot attended to the department of war, Cambon to the finances, Prieur (de la Côte-d'Or) and Prieur (de la Marne) to internal and administrative affairs; and Barrère, who soon joined them, became the daily orator of the party. As for Robespierre, he had no defined functions, but exercised a general oversight of the whole, commanding that political body as the head commands the material body and makes every member act in obedience to its will.

In that party the Revolution was incarnate; it was bent upon carrying out the Revolution with all its consequences, so that the people might some day enjoy all its results.

That party had to contend against two others: one wished to outdo it, the other to hold it back. Those two parties were: —

The Commune, represented by Hébert.

The Mountain, represented by Danton.

In "Père Duchesne" Hébert popularized obscenity of speech; insult followed the victims and laughter the exe-

cutions. In a short time it made tremendous progress. The Bishop of Paris and his vicars abjured Christianity; the Catholic worship was replaced by the worship of Reason, the churches were closed; Anacharsis Clootz became the apostle of the new goddess. The Committee of Public Safety took fright at the power of this ultra-revolutionary faction, which they thought had fallen with Marat, and which rested on immorality and atheism; Robespierre undertook to attack it single-handed. On December 5, 1793, he defied it from the tribune; and the Convention, which had perforce applauded the abjurations at the demand of the Commune, decreed, at the demand of Robespierre, who also had a religion of his own to establish, that *all violence and all measures contrary to liberty of worship were forbidden.*

Danton, in the name of the moderate portion of the Mountain, demanded the overthrow of the revolutionary government; the "Vieux Cordelier," edited by Camille Desmoulins, was the organ of the party. The Committee of Public Safety, that is to say, the dictatorship, was created, in its view, only to repress within and conquer without; and as the committee had been repressed within and beaten on the frontier, it — that is, the party led by Danton — demanded that a power which had become useless should be shattered in order that it might not subsequently become dangerous; the Revolution had pulled down, the Dantonists wished to rebuild on ground that had not been cleared.

These were the three factions by which the Convention was torn in the early days of 1794, when the action of our narrative takes place. Robespierre accused Hébert of atheism and Danton of corruption; he was accused by them of ambition, and the word *dictator* began to be whispered.

Such, then, was the condition of affairs when Marceau, as we have said, saw Danton for the first time, as he was using the orchestra for a tribune, and tossing words of weighty import to those who surrounded him. The play was "The Death of Cæsar;" the word had been passed to the Dantonists; they were all present at the performance, and, at a signal from their leader, they were to signify the application of these lines to Robespierre:

Oui, que César soit grand, mais que Rome soit libre.
Dieux! maîtresse de l'Inde, esclave aux bords du Tibre,
Qu'importe que son nom commande à l'univers,
Et qu'on l'appelle reine alors qu'elle est aux fers!
Qu'importe à ma patrie, aux Romains que tu braves,
D'apprendre que César a de nouveaux esclaves!
Les Persans ne sont pas nos plus fiers ennemis;
Il en est de plus grands. Je n'ai pas d'autre avis.[1]

And that is why Robespierre, who had been warned by Saint-Just, was at the Théâtre de la Nation that evening; for he realized what a weapon in the hands of his enemies the charge they made against him would be, if they succeeded in popularizing it.

But Marceau looked in vain for him in that brilliantly lighted hall, where the line of the boxes alone remained in a sort of half-darkness, because of the protruding of the galleries above them; and his eyes, fatigued by the vain search, returned constantly to the

[1] Ay, let Cæsar, if you will, be great, but let Rome be free.
Ye gods! of all the Indies mistress, but on Tiber's banks a slave,
What boots it that her name doth sway the universe,
And that she 's called a queen, when she with chains is laden?
What boots it to my country, to the Romans whom you defy,
To learn that Cæsar hath new slaves?
The Persians are not our most arrogant foes;
There are greater than they. I say no more.

group in the orchestra, whose noisy conversation attracted the attention of the whole audience.

"I saw our dictator to-day," said Danton. "They undertook to make peace between us."

"Where did you meet?"

"At his rooms; I had to climb the Incorruptible's three flights."

"What did you say to each other?"

"I said that I was fully aware of the Committee's hatred of me, but that I did not fear it. He answered that I was wrong, that they had no evil intentions with respect to me, but that we must have an understanding."

"An understanding! an understanding! that would be very well with people who act in good faith."

"That is just the answer I made him; at that he drew in his lips and wrinkled his forehead. I continued: 'Of course the royalists must be put down; but we must strike no blows except such as will do some good, and not confound the innocent with the guilty.'—'Why, who told you,' retorted Robespierre, sharply, 'that any innocent man has been put to death?'—'What do you say to that? no innocent men put to death!' I cried, turning to Hérault de Séchelles, who was with me; and I came away."

"Was Saint-Just there?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He ran his hand through his fine black hair, and from time to time arranged the knot of his cravat like Robespierre's."

Marceau's neighbor, whose head was resting on his hands, started and uttered the sort of hissing noise that comes from between the clinched teeth of a man who is holding himself back; Marceau paid little heed to him,

and turned his attention once more to Danton and his friends.

"The coxcomb!" said Camille Desmoulins, referring to Saint-Just; "he has so high an opinion of himself that he carries his head respectfully on his shoulders, like the blessed sacrament."

Marceau's neighbor removed his hands, and Marceau recognized the gentle, beautiful face of Saint-Just, pale with anger.

He rose and drew himself up to his full height.

"I will make you carry yours like a Saint-Denis, Desmoulins!" he exclaimed.

Thereupon he turned and left the balcony, the people standing aside to let him pass.

"Well, well! who would have supposed he was so near?" laughed Danton. "Faith, the package reached its address."

"By the way, Danton," said Philippaux, "have you seen Laya's pamphlet against you?"

"What say you? Laya writes pamphlets? Let him rewrite the 'Friend of the Laws.' I should like right well to read it, — the pamphlet, I mean."

"Here it is."

Philippaux handed him a pamphlet.

"And he signed it, *pardieu!* Why, he does n't know, it seems, that if he does n't hide in my cellar they 'll cut off his head."

"Hush! hush! the curtain is rising."

The word *hush!* passed from mouth to mouth through the hall; but a young man who was not in the plot continued to carry on a private conversation, although the actors were on the stage. Danton put out his hand, touched him with his finger, and said, with courtesy, in which there was a slight admixture of irony: —

" Citizen Arnault, let me listen as if they were playing 'Marius at Minturnæ.' "

The young author knew too much not to respect a request conveyed in those terms; he held his peace, and the most absolute silence made it possible for every one to listen to one of the worst plays that ever was put upon the stage, — " The Death of Cæsar."

But notwithstanding that silence, it was evident that no participant in the little conspiracy we have described had forgotten the purpose for which he had come. Glances were exchanged, signals became more frequent as the actors approached the passage which was to call forth the explosion.

" It 's in Scene III.," Danton whispered to Camille.

And he was repeating the lines with the actors, as if to hasten their delivery, when this passage occurred, immediately preceding that for which they were waiting: —

César, nous attendions de ta clémence auguste
Un don plus précieux, une faveur plus juste,
Au-dessus des États donnés par ta bonté.

CÉSAR.

Qu'oses-tu demander, Cimber?

CIMBER.

La liberté![1]

Three salvoes of applause greeted the words.

[1] Cæsar, we look to thy great clemency
For a more precious gift, a juster favor,
Above the States bestowed by thy kind heart.

CÆSAR.

What dar'st thou ask, O Cimber!

CIMBER.

Liberty!

"All goes well," said Danton.

He half rose from his seat.

Talma began: —

"Oui, que César soit grand, mais que Rome soit libre — "

Danton stood erect, casting about him the glance that a general casts over his army, assuring himself that every man is at his post, when suddenly his eyes rested on a certain point in the hall. The front of a box was raised; Robespierre protruded his sharp-featured, livid face. The eyes of the two enemies met, and could not look away from each other; there was in Robespierre's eyes all the irony of triumph, all the insolence of security. For the first time Danton felt a cold perspiration start out all over his body. He forgot the signal he was to give; the lines passed without applause or murmurs; he fell back beaten; the front of the box was raised, and all was said. The *guillotineurs* carried the day over the *Septembriseurs:* 93 imposed a spell upon 92.

Marceau, whose mind was engrossed by something very different from the tragedy, was perhaps the only one who witnessed, without understanding it, the scene we have described, which lasted only a few seconds. He had time, however, to recognize Robespierre; he rushed from the balcony, and arrived in the corridor in time to meet him.

He was as calm and cool as if nothing had happened. Marceau accosted him, and mentioned his name. Robespierre offered him his hand; Marceau, yielding to his first impulse, withheld his own. A bitter smile passed over Robespierre's lips.

"What do you want of me?" he asked.

"An interview of a few moments."

"Here, or at my house?"

"At your house."

"Come, then."

And the two men, agitated by such widely different emotions, walked away, side by side: Robespierre, calm and indifferent; Marceau, excited and curious.

So this was the man who held Blanche's destiny in his hands; the man of whom he had heard so much, whose incorruptibility alone was evident, but whose popularity could not but seem a problem. In truth, he had made use of none of the methods employed by his predecessors to gain popularity. He had neither the enthralling eloquence of Mirabeau, nor the paternal firmness of Bailly, nor the sublime impetuosity of Danton, nor the obscene arts of Hébert; if he worked for the people, he did it secretly, and without rendering an account of his work to the people. Amid the general levelling of language and costume, he had retained his polished speech and his fashionable dress;[1] in fact, he seemed to take as much pains to hold himself above the common herd as others took to mingle with it; and one would readily understand, at first sight, that that singular being must be either an idol or a victim of the multitude: he was both.

They reached the house. A narrow staircase led them to a room on the third floor; Robespierre opened the door. A bust of Rousseau, a table on which the "Con-

[1] Robespierre's usual attire is so well known that it has become almost proverbial. On the 20th Prairial, the day of the Feast of the Supreme Being, whose pontiff he was, he was dressed in a blue coat, a waistcoat of embroidered muslin over pink; black satin breeches, white silk stockings, and shoes with buckles completed the costume. He wore the same coat when he was carried to the scaffold.

trat Social" and "Émile" lay open, a commode and a few chairs were the only furniture of the room. But the greatest neatness prevailed everywhere.

Robespierre saw the effect produced on Marceau by the sight.

"This is Cæsar's palace," he said, with a smile; "what have you to ask the dictator?"

"The pardon of my wife, condemned to death by Carrier."

"Your wife, condemned by Carrier! the wife of Marceau, the republican of the days of antiquity! the Spartan soldier! What is Carrier doing at Nantes, pray?"

"Atrocious things."

Marceau thereupon drew an outline of the picture we have placed before the reader's eyes. Robespierre, during his recital, twisted about on his chair without interrupting; at last Marceau came to an end.

"So that is how I am always to be understood," said Robespierre, in a hoarse voice, — for his emotion was so great as to effect that change in his tone, — "wherever my eyes are not present to see and my hand to check useless carnage! There is enough blood that it is absolutely necessary to shed, and we are not at the end of it yet."

"But about my wife's pardon, Robespierre?"

Robespierre took a sheet of white paper.

"Her maiden name?"

"Why?"

"It is necessary for me to establish her identity."

"Blanche de Beaulieu."

Robespierre dropped the pen he held.

"The daughter of the Marquis de Beaulieu, the leader of the brigands?"

"Blanche de Beaulieu, the Marquis de Beaulieu's daughter."

"How does it happen that she is your wife?"

Marceau told him the whole story.

"Young fool! young madman!" he exclaimed; "do you know —?"

Marceau interrupted him.

"I did not come to ask for insults or advice; I ask you for her pardon. Will you give it me?"

"Marceau, will family ties, the influence of love, ever induce you to betray the Republic?"

"Never."

"Suppose you should find yourself face to face with the Marquis de Beaulieu, sword in hand?"

"I should fight him as I have already done."

"And suppose he should fall into your hands?"

Marceau reflected a moment.

"I would send him to you, and you yourself should be his judge."

"Do you swear to that?"

"On my honor."

Robespierre took up the pen once more.

"Marceau," he said, "you have had the good fortune to keep yourself pure in everybody's sight; I have known of you for a long time; I have long desired to see you."

Noticing Marceau's impatience, he wrote the first three letters of his name, then stopped.

"Listen: I ask you to give me five minutes now," he said, gazing earnestly at Marceau. "I give you a whole life in return for five minutes; they will be well paid for."

Marceau made a motion to signify that he would listen. Robespierre continued: —

"Some one has slandered me to you, Marceau; and yet you are one of the few men by whom I wish to be really known; for what care I for the judgment of men whom I do not esteem? Listen, then: three assemblies have in turn sought to guide the destiny of France, have been each represented by one man, and have accomplished the mission with which the age intrusted them: the Constituent, represented by Mirabeau, shook the foundations of the throne; the Legislative, incarnate in Danton, overthrew it. The work of the Convention is immense, for it is called upon to finish the work of tearing down and to begin that of rebuilding. I have in my mind a lofty aspiration, — to become the type of this period, as Mirabeau and Danton, respectively, were the types of theirs. In the history of the French people there will be three men, represented by the figures 91, 92, 93. If the Supreme Being gives me time to finish my work, my name will be above all names; I shall have done more than Lycurgus among the Greeks, than Numa at Rome, than Washington in America; for each of them had only a people just born to pacify, while I have an ancient, outworn society to regenerate. If I fall — spare me from uttering a blasphemy against you in my last hour, O my God! — if I fall before the allotted time, my name, which will have accomplished only the half of what it had to do, will retain the stain of blood that the other part would have wiped out; the Revolution will fall with it, and both will be calumniated. — That is what I had to say to you, Marceau; for I wish that certain men should, in any event, keep my name living and pure in their hearts, like the flame of the lamp in the tabernacle, and you are one of those men."

He finished writing his name.

"And now, here is your wife's pardon. You can go without even giving me your hand."

Marceau took his hand and wrung it; he tried to speak, but there were so many tears in his voice that he could not articulate a word, and Robespierre spoke first.

"Come, you must go; there is not a moment to lose. *Au revoir!*"

Marceau rushed downstairs; General Dumas was coming up as he went down.

"I have her pardon!" he cried, throwing himself into his arms; "I have her pardon. Blanche is saved!"

"Congratulate me too," his friend replied. "I have just been appointed commander-in-chief of the army of the Alps, and I have come to thank Robespierre."

They embraced. Marceau rushed into the street, hurried to Place du Palais-Égalité, where his carriage awaited him, ready to depart with the same speed with which it had brought him thither.

What a burden was lifted from his heart! what happiness awaited him! what joy after so much sorrow! His imagination plunged into the future; he anticipated the moment when, from the threshold of the dungeon, he should cry to his wife: "Blanche! you are free through my efforts; come, Blanche, and let your love and your kisses pay the debt of your life."

From time to time, however, a vague feeling of uneasiness passed through his mind, a sudden chill struck his heart. At such times he urged on the postilions, promised them money, gave it them lavishly and promised more; the wheels flew along the pavement; the horses devoured the road, and yet it seemed to him that they were hardly moving! Everywhere the relays were

ready, there was no delay; everything seemed to partake of the excitement by which he was possessed. In a few hours he had left Versailles, Chartres, Le Mans, and La Flèche behind him; he saw Angers in the distance. Suddenly he felt a terrible, appalling shock: the carriage was overturned and broken. He rose, bruised and bleeding, cut the traces of one of the horses with his sword, leaped quickly upon him, galloped to the first posting station, hired a race-horse, and continued his journey even more swiftly than before.

At last he has passed Angers, espies Ingrande, rides through Varades and Ancenis. His horse is dripping with foam and blood; he passes Saint-Donatien, and Nantes is in sight, — Nantes! which contains his soul, his life, his future! A few moments more and he will be in the city. He reaches the gate; his horse falls exhausted in front of the Bouffays prison; he has arrived, so what matters it!

"Blanche! Blanche!"

"Two tumbrils just left the prison yard," said the turnkey; "she was on the first."

"Malediction!"

And Marceau darts away on foot, amid the people who are hurrying in vast throngs toward the public square. He overtakes the last of the two tumbrils; one of the condemned men recognizes him.

"Save her, general. I could n't do it, and I was taken. *Vive le roi* and the good cause!"

It was Tinguy.

"Yes, yes!"

Marceau opens a path for himself; the crowd jostles and crushes him, but carries him on; he arrives on the square in the midst of the crowd; he is facing the scaffold, he waves his paper, shouting: —

"Pardon! pardon!"

At that moment the executioner, holding up a young girl's head by its long, fair hair, presented the hideous spectacle to the people; the horrified crowd turned away, for they fancied that it was vomiting torrents of blood! — Suddenly, from the midst of that silent multitude, a frenzied cry arose, in which all the human forces seemed to be concentrated. Marceau had recognized, between the teeth of that head, the red rose he had given the young Vendean.

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